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SERIES



Sarah B. Hagan  
from Mary B. Damon  
1893



Drive the hate from out the  
Mind  
Speak but words which be  
Kind  
Love thee well, who darest the  
next—  
Seldom shalt thou then be  
best  
Canada's Whiter

## THE DISTAFF SERIES

Issued under the auspices of the Board of Women  
Managers of the State of New York for  
the Columbian Exposition

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# HOUSEHOLD ART,

EDITED BY

CANDACE WHEELER



NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

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## NOTE.

MRS. WHEELER'S "The Philosophy of Beauty Applied to House Interiors" in part has appeared in *The Christian Union*; "The Development of American Homes," by Mrs. Van Rensselaer, was printed in *The Forum*; Mrs. Carter's "Wall-papers, Ceilings, and Dados" and Miss Humphreys's "The Progress of American Decorative Art" were originally published in the *London Art Journal*; and Mrs. Morse's "About Furnishings" is an extract from *Fashions*. Mrs. Runkle's "The Limits of Decoration" and Mrs. Harrison's "Some Work of the Associated Artists" were first printed respectively in *Harper's Bazar* and in *Harper's Magazine*. The concluding paper, "Decorative and Applied Art," was prepared expressly by Mrs. Wheeler for the Columbian Exposition Art Congress.

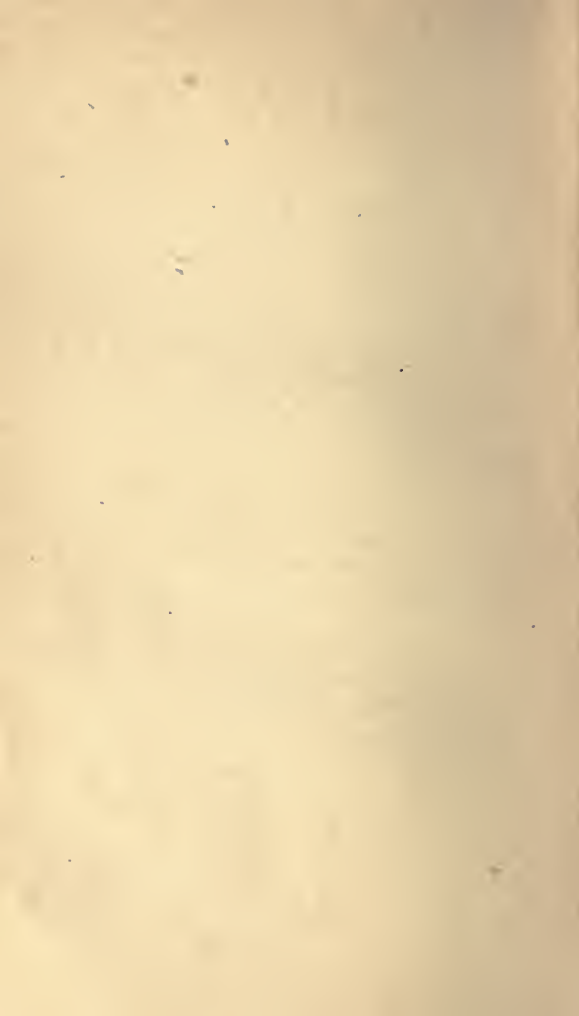


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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE series of collections of which this volume is a part is made up of representative work of the women of the State of New York in periodical literature.

This literature has been classified under its conspicuous divisions—Poetry, Fiction, History, Art, Biography, Translation, Literary Criticism, and the like.

A woman of eminent success in each department has then been asked to make a collection of representative work in that department, to include in it an example of her own work, and to place her name upon the volume as its Editor.

These selections have been made, as far as possible, chronologically, beginning with the earliest work of the century, in order that the volumes may carry out the plan of the

"Exhibit of Women's Work in Literature in the State of New York," of which they are an original part.

The aim of this Exhibit was to make for the Columbian Exposition a record of literary work, limited, through necessity, both by sex and locality, but, as far as possible, accurate and complete, and to preserve this record in the State Library in the Capitol at Albany.

It includes twenty-five hundred books, beginning with the works of Charlotte Ramsay Lennox, the first-born female author of the province of New York, published in London in 1752, closing with the pages of a translation of Herder, still wet from the press, and comprising the works of almost every author in the intervening one hundred and forty years.

It includes also three hundred papers read before the literary clubs of the State, a summary of the work of all writers for the press, and the folios which preserve the work of many able women who have not published books.

The women of the State of New York have had the honor of decorating and furnishing the Library of the Woman's Building. Believing

the best equipment of a library to be literature, they have therefore prepared this Exhibit, and have made its character comprehensive and historic, in order that it may not be temporary, but that it may be preserved in the State Library and may have permanent value for future lovers and students of Americana.

In the preparation of these volumes Messrs. Harper & Brothers have arranged that the composition and other mechanical work, as well as the designing of the cover, should be done by women, thus giving especial significance to the title, "The Distaff Series."

BLANCHE WILDER BELLAMY,

*Chairman of the Committee on Literature  
of the Board of Women Managers of the  
State of New York.*





HOUSEHOLD DECORATION.



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEAUTY APPLIED TO HOUSE INTERIORS.

BY MRS. CANDACE WHEELER.

THE element of beauty in the house was until recently a result of quite accidental fulfilment of unknown and unformulated laws rather than of any conscious effort to secure it. If it existed in any house it was by the fortuitous combination of good shapes in furniture, sympathetic tints in walls and draperies, the subtle and harmonizing effects of time, or to that unrecognized creator of beauty—harmonious human living.

There are houses—not many, to be sure, but enough to have come within the experience of most people—which have always possessed a mysterious charm, a nameless something, an attractive ghost of harmony and tranquillity, a spirit which diffused contentment and quiet happiness. It might be an historic house with permanent furniture, blessed by many years of placid occupation,

or it might be a succession of houses inhabited in turn by people blessed with instinctive knowledge of the laws of color—people who can command the charm of beauty, and whom it will follow like an obedient slave from habitation to habitation ; for this mysterious something that distinguishes particular rooms and makes beautiful particular houses is the charm of *color*—color used in fair proportions and possessing sympathetic qualities.

Occasionally the tones have been softened and harmonized by a perspective of years, as hues in a landscape are harmonized by atmosphere and distance. This beautifying effect of time, however, has been generally resented by the average householder, and ruthlessly swept aside as often as occasion offered. On the other hand, the charm of the house may have been referred solely to age, forgetting that in material things the only charm of age is in its power of harmonizing color.

The laws of color, used in such masses or spaces as are necessary on walls of rooms or in house interiors, even now have been scarcely formulated, only the more fundamental having become a part of human knowledge.

The greatest possibilities of beauty derived from this element of tint belong to but the few "born colorists" of the world—to whom it is a natural language, and who scarcely know how or wherefore they are guided to sure results.

What is called among painters the *color sense* is much more rare than that other natural endowment or susceptibility known as an ear for music, and yet the one is to the eye precisely what the other is to the ear—an instinctive knowledge of the laws which govern harmony.

The "born colorist" is one who without special training, or perhaps in spite of it, can unerringly combine or oppose tints which charm the eye and satisfy the sense.

Even among painters this is by no means a common gift, and it is almost more rare to find a picture distinguished for its harmony and beauty of color than to see a room in which nothing jars and everything works together for beauty.

It seems strange that the color sense should be a rarer personal gift than the musical sense, since Nature apparently is far more lavish of her lessons for the eye than for the ear. The tones of the octave certainly exist in the world, but they have

been gathered from widely different substances, and carefully linked in order and sequence by human ingenuity; while to the painter harmonies occur and sequences follow each other, not only over the great surfaces of land and sea and sky, but in the tints and shadows and reflections of every flower and plant and tree.

The object-lesson begins when we first open our eyes upon the world, and continues through all the circle of sensation and experience which makes up our human lives.

I have said that our first teacher in color is Nature, and I might go further and say that an intelligent study of the distribution of tints in the natural world will make a successful colorist; but it must be an intelligent, broad, and philosophical study—not a partial one.

The whole of the art is founded upon natural laws, but it is very possible to misread or misinterpret them by only partial observation. Principles of masses and spaces and gradations must underlie all accidental harmonies and effects, just as in music the simple strong under-chords of the bass must be the ground for all the changes and trippings of the upper melodies.

The principles and laws of beautiful color,

so far as we understand them, correspond curiously to the principles of melodious sound. It is as impossible to produce a beautiful effect from *one* tone of color as to make a melody upon one note of the harmonic scale; it is the skilful variation of tone or opposition of tint which gives permanent satisfaction to the eye.

In one art, sequence produces the effect upon the senses, and in the other, juxtaposition.

There is no need even of a different nomenclature for the qualities peculiar to the two—*scale, notes, tones, harmonies*, the words express effects common to both. But color has this advantage, that its harmonies can be *fixed*; once expressed, they remain as a constant and ever present delight.

In what is popularly called "House Decoration," or, in other words, the attempt to secure beauty as a permanent quality of the home, the first and most important necessity is harmony and effect of color; in fact, without this all effort is vain, all expenditure futile. Color is the beneficent angel or the malicious devil of the house. Properly understood and successfully entreated, it is the most powerful mental influence of the home; but if totally disregarded or igno-

rantly dealt with it is able to introduce an element of unrest, to refuse healing to tired nerves and overtasked energies, to stir up anger and malice and all unseen enemies of household comfort—the enemies that lie in wait for the victims of weakness and fatigue.

This may seem a very far-fetched conclusion, but it is a fact, experienced and tested by every sensitive temperament.

In applying principles of color to house decoration, the first and most important one is that of gradation. The strongest, and generally the purest, tones of color belong naturally at the base; and the floor of a room means the base upon which the scheme of decoration is to be built. The carpet or floor covering should therefore carry the strongest tones of color.

If a single tint is to be used, the walls must take the next gradation, and the ceiling the last.

These gradations must be far enough removed from each other in strength or intensity to answer any requirements of light or depth; but not far enough to lose their relation. The connecting grades must be easily imaginable, and the relation between them perfectly apparent. These three masses



of related color are the groundwork upon which one can play infinite variations.

The tint of any particular room should be chosen with reference not only to personal liking, but first of all to the quantity and quality of light which pervades it.

A north room will require warm and bright treatment. Warm reds, and golden browns, or pure gold colors—especially in curtains and draperies—will give an effect of perfect sunshine in a dark and shadowy room; but the same treatment in a room fronting the south would produce an almost insupportable brightness.

Interiors with a southern exposure should be treated with cool, light colors—blues in various grades, water greens, and silvery tones which will contrast with the positive yellow of sunlight. Rooms with an east or west light may carry successfully colors of any tint without violating fundamental laws.

I have already given the scale in which color should be used upon the floor, walls, and ceiling, and with this, and reference to direction and amount of light, one may begin to indulge in the personal fancies which give originality and individuality to a home.

After the masses of color are properly dis-

tributed comes the enjoyable work of embellishment; of intensifying it in one place or softening it in another; of arranging contrasts which will enhance the value of each of the tints contrasted.

If the walls are hung with paper or inexpensive textile the change of tone may be obtained in their design; that is, the material, whether paper or textile, must be ornamented in monochrome. It is not safe to depend upon hangings of the ordinary class for variety in color.

Knowledge of the laws of color does not enter largely into general manufactures, and the contrasts obtainable in paper-hangings and chintzes are too crude and inartistic to make good walls, except in the safe and frequent examples of printing in one tint—a darker design upon a lighter background. These give a soft general effect, and the relief to the eye produced by gradation of tone.

This matter of variation without contrast in wall surface is one of the most important in house decoration. Some difference of tone there must be in large plain surfaces which lie within the level of the eye, or the monotony of a room becomes fatiguing. A plain painted wall may, it is true, be broken

by pictures, or cabinets, or bits of china—anything, in short, which will throw parts of it into shadow, and illumine other parts with gilded reflections; but even then there will be long plain spaces above the picture or cabinet line, where blank monotony of tone will be fatal to the general effect of the room.

It is in this upper space—where the wall is a plain and painted one—that a broad line of flat decoration should occur; but on a wall hung with paper or cloth it is by no means necessary.

Damasked cloths, where the design is shown by the crossing of woven threads, are particularly effective and satisfactory as wall coverings. The soft surface is luxurious to the imagination, and the play of light and shadow upon the warp and woof interests the eye, although there is no actual change of color.

Too much stress can hardly be laid upon the variation of tone in wall surfaces, since the four walls stand for the atmosphere of a room. They are what the eye constantly sees and feels, and one might almost as well be shut up in the dark as to have an absolute blank presented on every side to that most active minister of happiness, the eye.

Floor coverings, on the contrary, are better in what are called solid colors, and there is philosophy in it as well, since it is pleasanter to be unconscious of one's footing than to have the attention constantly attracted by change of tint or even of tone. A good wood floor is in some respects the best possible one for a living-room; but unless it be stained or partially covered the whole scheme of color in the room must be subordinated to it, and instead of a simple problem it becomes rather a complex one. The fact, however, remains that a hard wood floor well filled and finished, and carrying one large or several small rugs, fine in themselves and not out of key with the general color of the room, is the most satisfactory foundation for general purposes.

But in this, as in all decoration, details based upon general principles of color are quite within the power of the average homemaker.

It is not in detail so much as in consideration of underlying principles that the creator of the home is often at fault.

The preliminary study, the careful consideration of the circumstances under which the house is to be maintained, the place and use, should be much more earnestly taken

into account than the amount of money to be expended upon it or in it. The instinct of the house-maker may do much, but it cannot, without study of appropriateness in every direction, make even the simplest summer cottage a true expression of beauty.

The instinct of home-making which abides in the minds of women at the present period in America is greatly stimulated by a very general artistic impulse—a drift of the popular mind towards art. The enjoyment of perfected methods of manufacture, of beautiful lines and surfaces, of exquisite harmonies of color—in short, of the material creations of the true artist-artisan—is an almost universal feminine experience.

It follows that those who are possessed of this artistic insight and love of beauty not only find the keenest enjoyment in the natural exercise of those gifts in house-furnishing, but often produce most charming and original effects by the clever choice and happy arrangement of things which go to make up the home.

It is true that they sometimes fail in compassing the fitness or appropriateness which makes the full perfection of this beautiful art, and shirk the preliminary study which is necessary to thorough completeness. They

are apt to follow fancy and taste not based upon the requirements of circumstances, and as a consequence the result is a lack of the restfulness and calm which are given by careful fitting of beauty upon use.

A perfectly furnished house is a crystallization of the culture, the habits, and the tastes of the family, and not only expresses but *makes* character.

Children living in such a home grow up with the knowledge of form and color, a sense of beauty and fitness—in short, with a standard of taste which in maturity stamps them with that unconscious superiority which distinguishes men or women whose cultivation has been gradual and unlesioned.

It is the completeness of a home, which includes provision for the mental as well as physical wants of the complex human creature, which makes some houses so much more delightful than others, and may add to the simplicity of the modest summer cottage a comprehensive charm which is entirely lacking in many an elaborate and overflowing dwelling.

A summer cottage is not a difficult problem to deal with, if it is constantly remembered that it is a summer cottage, to be used

through only a portion of the year, and that portion when "out-of-doors," with its large bounty of light and air, is really a part of the house and home life. When these conditions are not fully recognized and understood, it argues a total want of the home-making instinct, as well as an absence of the gift of color, should the house fail to be satisfying and even charming.

After the purpose of the house is fully considered, its position comes in also as a condition to be constantly remembered, since much and lasting charm is derived from harmony of motive with nature's surroundings in decoration, and choice of color as appropriate to place. Whatever design appears in wall-decoration or hangings is far more effective if it bears some relation to the surroundings and place of the house.

It goes without saying that classic forms and highly artificial designs are not appropriate in cottages of the character we are considering, and also that furniture should be simpler and lighter than in houses intended for constant family living. While chairs and sofas should be entirely without elaborate upholstery, hangings and cushions can be made of some well-colored cotton or linen material which wind and sun and

dampness cannot spoil, and of which the freshness can always be restored by laundrying. These are general rules, appropriate to all summer cottages.

A house which is to be closed for six or eight months of the year should really, to be consistent, be inexpensively furnished.

If the house is by the sea, the walls should repeat, with many variations, the tones of sea and sand and sky: the gray-greens of sparse grasses and rushes; the blues which change from blue to green with every cloud-shadow; the pearl tints which become rose in morning or evening light, and the browns and olives of sea-mosses and lichens. This treatment of color will make the interior of the house a part of the great out-of-doors, and create a harmony between the artificial shelter and nature.

There is philosophy in following, as far as the limitations of simple color will allow, the changeableness and fluidity of natural effects along the shore, and allowing the mood of the brief summer life to fall into entire harmony with the dominant expression of the sea.

If, harmonious color being once secured, most of the materials used in the furnish-



ing of the house are chosen for design based upon or suggested by forms belonging to the life of the sea, an impression is produced of having entered into complete and perfect harmony with the elements and aspects of nature. The artificialities of life fall more and more into the background, and one is refreshed with a sense of having established relations with natural surroundings which are entirely harmonious and satisfactory.

It may seem very far-fetched to ascribe this influence to appropriate furnishings of a house, but the house is the shell of the human being, and the mental shape of the inmate must necessarily be affected by its most intimate surroundings.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the summer-house is placed in the neighborhood of fields and trees and mountains, it will be found that strong and positive treatment of the interior is more in harmony with nature. Even heavier furniture looks fitting where the house is surrounded with massive tree-growths; and stronger and more positive colors can be used in hangings and draperies. This is due to the deeper and more positive coloring of a landscape than of a sea view. The masses of

strong and slightly varying green in foliage, the red-browns or vivid greens of fields and crops, the dark lines of tree trunks and branches, as well as the unchanging forms of rock and hill-side, call for a corresponding strength of interior effect. It is a curious fact, also, that where a house is surrounded with myriads of small natural forms of leaves and flowers and grasses, plain spaces of color in interiors, or spaces where form is greatly subordinated to color, are more grateful to the eye than prominently decorated surfaces. A repetition of small forms which exist but sparingly in nature, and are for the most part hidden under lengths of liquid blue, is pleasing and suggestive in a home by the sea; but in the country, where form is prominent and positive, and prints itself constantly upon both mental and bodily vision, unbroken color surfaces are found to be far more agreeable.

It will be seen that general principles of furnishing depend upon arbitrary circumstances and natural surroundings quite as much as upon the character and pursuits of the family who are to be lodged, and that the final charm of the home is attained by a perfect adaptation of principles to conditions both of nature and humanity.

This is equally true of all classes of houses which are to become homes, so that particular directions or rules for the sensible and beautiful arrangement of interiors must always follow the guiding incidents of class and locality.

The circumstances and surroundings, as well as the kind of use required of a house, must be considered as conditions of beauty. It is equally necessary to study each part or division of the house to secure the full and complete result.

The predominant *use* of each room gives the clew to the best rules of treatment in decoration and furniture.

For instance, the hall, being an intermediate space between in and out of doors, should be colored and furnished in direct reference to this, and to its common use as a thoroughfare by all members of the family. It is not a place of prolonged occupation, and may therefore properly be without the luxury and ease of lounges and lounging-chairs. But as long as it serves both as entrance-room to the house and for carrying the stairways to the upper floors, it should be treated in such a way as to lead up to and prepare the mind for whatever of inner luxury there may be in the house. At the

same time it should preserve something of the simplicity and freedom from all attempt at effect which belong to out-of-door life. The difference between its decoration and furniture and that of other divisions of the house should be principally in surface, and not in color.

Difference of surface is secured by the use of materials which are permanent and durable in effect, such as wood, plaster, and leather. These may all be colored without injury to their impression of permanency, although it is generally preferable to take advantage of indigenons or "inherent color," like the natural yellows and russets of wood and leather.

When these are used for both walls and ceiling, it will be found that; to give the necessary variation, and prevent an impression of monotony and dullness, some tint must be added in the ornament of the surface, which could be gained by a forcible deepening or variation of the general tone, like a deep golden brown, which is the lowest tone of the scale of yellow, or a red, which would be only a variant of the prevailing tint.

The introduction of an opposing or contrasting tint, like pale blue in small masses

as compared with the general tint, even if it is in so small a space as that of a water-color on the wall, adds what an artist calls *snap* to the general effect, and enlivens and invigorates a harmony.

Perhaps no color carries with it a more appropriate influence at the entrance of a house than red in its different values. Certain tints of it, which are known both as Pompeian and Damascens red, have sufficient yellow in their composition to fall in with the yellows of oiled wood, and give the charm of a variant but related color. In its stronger and deeper tones it is in direct contrast to the green of abundant foliage, and therefore a good color for the entrance-hall or vestibule of a country house; while the paler tones, which run into pinks, hold the same opposing relation to the gray and blue of the sea-shore. If walls and ceiling are of wood, a rug of which the prevailing color is red will often give the exact note which is needed to preserve the room from monotony and insipidity.

A stair-carpet is a valuable point to make in a hall, and it is well to reserve all opposing color for this one place, which, as it rises, meets all sight on a level, and makes its contrast directly and unmistakably. A

stair-carpet has other reasons for use in a country house than æsthetic ones, as the stairs are conductors of sound to all parts of the house, and should therefore be muffled, and because a carpeted stair furnishes much safer footing for the two family extremes of childhood and age.

The furniture of the hall should not be fantastic, as some cabinet-makers seem to imagine. Impossible twists in the supports of tables and chairs are perhaps more objectionable in this first vestibule or entrance to the house than elsewhere, because the mind is not quite free from out-of-door influences, or ready to take pleasure in the vagaries of the human fancy. Simple chairs, settles, and tables, more solid perhaps than is desirable in other parts of the house, are what the best natural, as well as the best cultivated, taste demands.

If there is one place more than another where a picture performs its full work of suggestion and decoration, it is in a hall which is otherwise bare of ornament. Pictures in dining-rooms make very little impression as pictures, because the mind is engrossed with the first and natural purpose of the room, and consequently not in a waiting and easily impressible mood; but

in a hall, if one stops for even a moment, the thoughts are at leisure, and waiting to be interested.

Aside from the color effect, which may be so managed as to be very valuable, pictures hung in a hall are full of suggestion of wider mental and physical life, and, like books, are indications of the tastes and experiences of the family. Of course there are country houses where the halls are built with fireplaces, and windows commanding favorite views, and are really intended for family sitting-rooms and gathering-places; in this case it is generally preceded by a vestibule which carries the character of an entrance-hall, leaving the large room to be furnished more luxuriously, as is proper to a sitting-room.

The dining-room shares with the hall a purpose common to the life of the family, and, while it admits of much more variety and elaboration, that which is true of the hall is equally true of the dining-room, that it should be treated with materials which are durable and have surface quality, although its decoration should be preferably with china rather than with pictures. It is important that the color of a dining-room should be pervading color—that is, that

walls and ceiling should be kept together by the use of one color only, in different degrees of strength.

For many reasons, but principally because it is the best material to use in a dining-room, the rich yellows of oiled wood make the most desirable color and surface. The rug, the curtains, the portières, and screen, can then be of any good tint which the exposure of the room and the decoration of the china seem to indicate. If it has a cold northern exposure, reds or gold browns are indicated; but if it is a sunny and warm-looking room, green or strong India blue will be found more satisfactory.

The materials used in curtains, portières, and screens should be of cotton or linen, or some plain woollen goods which are as easily washable. A one-colored, heavy-threaded cotton canvas, a plain linen ticking in solid color, or indigo-blue domestic, all make extremely effective and appropriate furnishings. The variety of blue domestic which is called denim is the best of all fabrics for this kind of furnishing if the color is not too dark, and that can be made lighter by bleaching.

The prettiest country house dining-room I know is ceiled and wainscoted with wood,



the walls above the wainscoting carrying an ingrain paper of the yellow-brown of the wood; the line of division between the wainscot and wall being broken by a row of old blue India china plates, arranged in groups of different sizes and running entirely around the room. There is one small mirror set in a broad carved frame of yellow wood hung in the centre of a rather large wall-space, its angles marked by small Dutch plaques; but the whole decoration of the room outside of these pieces consists of draperies of blue denim in which there is a design, in narrow white outline, of leaping fish, and the widening water-circles and showery drops made by their play. The white lines in the design answer to the white spaces in the decorated china, and the two used together in profusion have an unexpectedly decorative effect. The table and chairs are, of course, of the same colored wood used in the ceiling and wainscot, and the rug is an India cotton of dark and light blues and white. The sideboard is an arrangement of fixed shelves, but covered with a beautiful collection of blue china, which serves to furnish the table as well.

If the dining-room had a northern exposure, and it was desirable to use red instead

of blue for coloring, as good an effect could be secured by depending for ornament upon the red Kaga porcelain so common at present in Japanese and Chinese shops, and using with it the Eastern cotton known as *bez*. This is dyed with madder, and exactly repeats the red of the porcelain, while it is extremely durable both in color and texture. Borders of yellow stitchery, or straggling fringes of silk and beads, add very much to the effect of the drapery and to the character of the room.

The parlor of a country house is often, or generally, a composite room. It answers the purpose of a reception-room for guests, and it is also, if the house does not contain a library or sitting-room, the only in-door gathering-place of the family. If the house includes a library or sitting-room, the parlor can be made much more exclusive in treatment—not always, however, to its advantage, even from an æsthetic point of view.

It is a kind of homage we pay to friendship, and to the people whom we value outside of the family, to set apart one room for their visits, and this room, in deference to the sentiment of friendship and to the supposed largeness of the circle which com-

prises it, has generally more space and is more carefully proportioned than any other of the rooms in the house. On account of this unconscious dedication to society in general, it is desirable to treat it with a conservatism of taste and liberality of expenditure which are not appropriate in other rooms. It would be impossible to give a formula for furnishing such a room, but general treatment can be suggested and general ideas given, which may be adapted to the different wants of different situations and families.

It must begin by being beautiful in color, and as, if it is used strictly as a parlor or reception-room, it will lack the variety and richness which is given to the library by books, lounging-chairs, and all the odds and ends of comfort and use which distinguish the family-room of the house, it will be necessary from the very first to keep to a general idea of delicacy and elegance, no matter how simple the furniture and decorations are intended to be. It may be like a lady's summer afternoon toilet of fresh muslins and ribbons, or one of richer material, but the idea of being prepared for observation and for criticism properly underlies all that goes to make up the parlor or reception-

room. In the life of the house, it answers to the afternoon toilet of the individual.

The walls may be hung with paper or chintz, or they may be painted, and carry a stencilled frieze or a scattered design done in gold or silver; but there should be a prevailing tone or tint of color, which holds and softens all the differing elements which make up the interior, as the misty atmosphere of a landscape softens all the hard and rocky features which compose it. The tint may be blue or green or rose or cream, but it must be delicate, and everything which goes to make up the whole should be in gradations of the same tint; or it may be in white, or in pale yellow, which has the property of harmonious combination in a greater degree than any other color.

If the walls are hung with paper which carries some design, the curtains should be of a plain tint, without design; but if, on the contrary, the walls are plain, the curtains may well introduce design.

This is by no means an invariable rule, for one of the most delightful color effects in the world is produced by walls of a pale greenish blue, and India silk curtains of the same tint but darker in tone, which give all the variation possible to one color

by the transparent effect of light through them.

For a summer room of this character the floor should not be covered with carpet, but show the floor between white goat's-hair rugs, or other rugs of sufficiently soft tints for the purpose; but it is difficult to find India rugs sufficiently light in tone not to seem positive and harsh in a room as dainty as this.

One or two water-colors in narrow gold frames are almost necessary to the effect of such a scheme of decoration if the walls are plain, but if they are covered with figured paper or chintz, these are not so imperatively needed. Photographs of interesting pictures mounted in white-wood frames seem also to be in accord with a room treated in this fashion.

The furniture should be of light wood or of cane painted white, and furnished with abundant cushions of various tints which are in harmony with the general color. It is quite possible to play a color-chord in such trifles as this which will go far towards completing the successful influence of the room.

After all, the final charm of any room lies in the addition of bits of things which

give character as well as beauty—little treasures which are too choice for the wear and tear of every day: a cup of Venetian glass which can be carried in the tray of a trunk and go back to the city home when summer is over; a small, smooth plaster copy of a Barye bronze; the latest and daintiest books; and, above all, here and there a jar of flowers, or branches which *go* with the room. These are the things which complete and perfect any scheme of beautiful color, and give character to a delicate interior.

In considering the treatment of a room which must serve the purpose of both reception-room and library or family gathering-room, it is necessary to keep in mind this double use. If it is a large one—and it needs to be for this double and almost opposing dedication—it is possible to harmonize the claims of ceremony and of family ease by the arrangement of certain parts of the room for the one and for the other, defending the family lounge or writing-table or easy-chairs by an outwork which may be a screen, or a judiciously looped curtain, the back of an upright piano, or a double bank of book-shelves turning an irreproachable phalanx of decorative standard

editious to the caller who does not know the password, and showing the well-thumbed shabbiness of the familiar literary ne'er-do-well to the family side of the room. Such a room is apt to be a fascinating one by reason of this very variety of use and purpose, and because it is a centre for all the family treasures. Books, pictures, papers, photographs, bits of decorative needle-work, all centre here, and all are on most orderly behavior, like children at company dinner.

The color of such a room may, and should, be much warmer and stronger than that of a parlor pure and simple, the very constancy and hardness of its use indicating tints of strength and resistance; but, keeping that in mind, the rules for general use of color and harmony of tints will apply as well to a room used for a double purpose as for a single.

Of course the furniture should be more solid and darker, as would be necessary for constant use, but the deepening of tones in general color provides for that, and for the use of rugs of a different character. In a room of this kind perhaps the best possible effect is produced by the use of some textile as a wall-covering, as in that case the same material with a contrasted color in the

living can be used for curtains, and to some extent in the furniture.

This use of one material has not only an effect of richness due to the best room of the house, but it softens and brings together all the heterogeneous things which different members of a large family are apt to require in a sitting-room.

The bedrooms of a house demand the utmost individuality of expression, and are a pretty sure test of the liberality of the mind and understanding of character of the female sharer in the house partnership.

As each room is in a certain sense the home of the individual occupant, almost the shell of his or her mind, there will be something narrow and despotic in the house rules if this is not expressed. The fact should never be lost sight of that the first principle of beauty is appropriateness, and no room could be beautiful which failed to express the individuality of the occupant.

Even in advance of this reference to individuality, color must come in as the prime factor of beauty. Strong, simple, good color is a proper foundation for any treatment of country interiors.

All bedroom walls and furnishings should be washable, and therefore papers and car-



pets should not come into the list of possibilities. Stained or painted walls and partially uncovered floors are a necessity, but a liberal use of washable textiles in curtains, portières, bedspreads, and table-covers will give quite as much sense of luxury as decorated walls and carpets. In fact, one may run through all the variations, from the daintiest and most befrilled and elegant of bedrooms to the "boys' room," which includes all or any of the various implements of sport or the hobbies of the boy collector, and yet keep inviolate the principles of harmony of color and appropriateness to use, and so accomplish beauty.

I have taken the summer cottage, or the country house, as an illustration of the laws of color, treatment, and arrangement of interiors, because it is the country house which more generally comes under the ministrations of the inexperienced home-maker; but the philosophy which should govern the treatment of the most elaborate and costly interior, whether for public or private use, and that which will make the simplest cottage a success, is identical. It is the principle of appropriateness, and the intelligent and instructive use of color. Of course, in public buildings the color effect depends

upon materials and not upon use of pigments, but the architect who should ignore the effect of color and reflection in his materials would lose almost as much as he could hope to gain by proportion.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN HOMES.

BY MRS. M. G. VAN RENSSELAER.

THE social condition of the communities of the past may be divined in a broad way from a mere list of their most conspicuous and characteristic buildings. How much is told when we say that the typical structures in Egypt were stupendous temple-palaces and rock-hewn tombs; in Assyria palaces that were not temples; and in Greece temples that were not palaces, but the people's treasuries and trophy-chambers, and near neighbors of the public rostrum. How large a glimpse of history is afforded by the thought that the Romans were especially constructors of bridges, aqueducts, amphitheatres, and triumphal arches; that mediæval Europe built chiefly fortified castles and huge churches; and that in later times the Low Countries expressed themselves in town-halls and trade-halls, France in royal châ-

teaus, Italy in princely city palaces, and England in baronial country homes.

Civilization is more complex to-day than in earlier ages, and communities less isolated and therefore less individual; and for both these reasons architecture nowhere devotes itself conspicuously to any single class of buildings. It expresses national traits and social facts with as much truth as ever; only these traits are less strongly marked, these facts are more numerous and involved, and so the record in stone is less easily deciphered. Nevertheless, there are characteristic, typical buildings to be found in every land, and they may be discovered if we reverse the process of thought, and, instead of reading history in architecture, read architecture in the light of social conditions. From the temple-palaces and tombs of Egypt we can reconstruct in the rough Egyptian society; but likewise, were all the buildings of Egypt lost, we might imagine their nature had we any knowledge of her people and her rulers. Surely, then, we must know enough of our own country to determine, amid all the welter of current architectural effort, where it is that we most clearly and characteristically express ourselves.

A truism brings us indeed at once to our

goal. Every American knows, every foreigner sees, that ours is a land not for a class or caste, but for the people as a whole. This means that it must be a land upon which individual rather than federal, municipal, or corporate activity has set its mark. When individuals build, it is houses to live in, shops and offices to work in; and so our choice of typical buildings must lie between these two classes. As between the two it is not hard to select. Be it ever so costly and conspicuous, ever so novel in dimensions, design, and arrangement, ever so interesting from the purely architectural point of view, a business building cannot express the personality of its owner as does the house in which he lives. And it is the expression of personalities in the aggregate, the expression of the men and women who make up a nation, which gives a class of structures a truly typical character. To see where the American people stands in the matter of taste, to see how far it has got on the road of æsthetic progress, and whither this road is likely to lead, we must look at its homes and especially at their interiors.

The first fact they prove is the truth of the truism just set down. Ours is a land for the people: its immense wealth is very

widely distributed. Even our few biggest and finest city houses do not equal the many private *hôtels* of modern Paris, nor would our most magnificent country homes take similar rank in England. But on the other hand an English architect recently said to his professional brethren: "Take the ordinary house of the middle-class American and compare it with the building of the same class on this side, and I think the odds will be found to be largely in favor of the former." If we are in search of the lessons as well as of the facts that our typical buildings teach, do we not find one just here? It is the lesson that in America progress in art must come as a general advance of the whole nation. The improvement of a class cannot help us much when we have really no upper class permanently marked off by birth or possessions. Architecture cannot here devote itself to country homes like those of which we think when we say "Elizabethan art," or to city palaces like those which resume the meaning of the words "Italian Renaissance art." It is above all the average dwelling that will be improved if our architecture grows, and of course it can be improved only by the development of good taste in the public at large.

What now is the present condition of this dwelling more narrowly examined?

The Englishman just quoted says that our city homes, whether single houses or apartment houses, are particularly well planned both for convenience and for beauty. We may venture to include our best country homes in the verdict, and may be greatly pleased with it, remembering that to plan well is the beginning, source, and inspiration of all architectural excellence. A Frenchman who also wrote about us not long ago says that in our house-architecture, especially, we pay too much attention to contour and silhouette, and thus render our plans irregular, but that "notwithstanding this defect" there is a great charm about our houses, villas, and cottages which are "less formal and far more home-like" than their English prototypes. The first fact he mentions is a fact, but he has got it, so to say, by the wrong end. It is because we distinctly want diversity and irregularity in our plans that our houses show broken masses and outlines. We think much less of exterior effect than Frenchmen who, to keep the outside of a house dignified and harmonious, make use of plans which, while excellent for Frenchmen, would never content the American soul.

Nor is the irregularity of our plans really a defect. We ought not to be content with the simpler, more formalized planning of French houses. Architecture can never be anything unless it is the faithful interpreter of actual needs, instinctive wants; and in their homes men of so-called Anglo-Saxon blood need comfort in a much more detailed, complicated, and varied sense of the word than is understood by men of Latin blood. In most artistic matters we are unlike the English; but our inherited wish that a house should exactly fit the needs of its inhabitants has drawn us pretty close to them in our ideals of domestic architecture. Yet we have fallen into no slavish imitation. For instance, our customs in fenestration are very different from theirs, because we need rather to exclude the summer sun than to admit it generously, and our love for wide verandas is certainly indigenous. And does not the French critic say that in general we have improved upon our English models?

If, then, our plans are irregular and varied, it means that we have started right in the path of domestic architecture; and if they are excellent, it means that we have made the first and most important step in advance. So here is the second lesson: Let us cherish



our instinct for individual expression in the planning of our homes while trying in their exteriors to attain more unity, dignity, and grace than as a rule we have yet achieved.

Let us cherish this instinct, I say. It might better be written, Let us develop it to a nicer, keener sensibility than we feel to-day. Many of our recent homes are quite perfect in their planning, not only as exercises of architectural skill, but as expressions of the special needs, habits, and tastes of their occupants. But in others, especially of the costlier kinds, which are equally good if considered as solutions of an abstract problem, we see in the character of the problem an affectation of needs that did not exist. The American client does not think, as a foolish French client might, that he should sacrifice the interior to the exterior of his house, but he sometimes is willing that the interior should misrepresent himself. If we have much money but no desire or no opportunity to lead a hospitable social life, we may need a big house and a handsome one, but we do not need one like our neighbor's where dinners and balls are of constant occurrence. Stately, somewhat stiffish drawing-rooms are a necessity to

him, and a dining-room to seat four dozen guests. To us they are worse than luxuries: they are affectations, and so both vulgar and inartistic. Getting them we may get in one sense a beautiful house. But it will not be a good house, for it will have little more expression, vitality, or human interest than a piece of scene-painting. Nor will the chance we give in its construction help the advance of art as much as though we should say to our architect: "Build me a house in which I and my family can live thus and so; make it big, make it beautiful, but give me a billiard-room for the boys instead of a ball-room for the guests who will never come, a great play-room for the children, a fine office or library for my work, a gallery for my pictures—rooms for us to live in, not rooms which exist merely because it is 'the thing' to have them. Make it my house, my own, not just a house, however beautiful." If we do not say something like this, how are we more intelligent than the farmers' wives we laugh at because they live in the kitchen and open the parlor only for weddings and funerals? Here, then, lies another lesson: If we want good houses and if we want our architecture to grow supple, subtle, skilful, and apt for any task, we

should know in advance exactly how we mean to live, and demand a house which exactly expresses that intention.

General success in the arrangement of our homes is a product of recent days, and hand in hand with it has come also progress in the matter of their fashioning. Look back some fifty years, and we see chiefly white walls, articles of furniture that are plain and few, and draperies meant to keep out the draughts rather than please the eye. Pass over some twenty years, and we come to gold or "velvet" wall-papers and costly "snites" of rosewood and satin furniture, while the ornamentation which was almost wholly lacking before is supplied by gilded cornices and mirror-frames, Landscer engravings, a few dismal pictures, and bronzes of strictly commercial quality. Of course there were exceptions to the rule during both these periods, but such were the typical homes of America until the present generation began to build. In the first period we wanted serviceable, respectable-looking houses; in the second we wanted "handsome" houses; but in neither did we think much of beauty or interfere much with the upholsterer, not yet risen to the rank of a "decorative artist."

There is much in the very sound of the words "decorative art" to make the judicious grieve, and more in the results of our recent devotion to the ideas they have been made to convey. One is sometimes almost tempted to feel, indeed, that the art of making beautiful homes, which is architecture, has had no deadlier enemy in America than the "artist in decoration." Nevertheless, he and his kin, including the house-mother who imitates him in amateur fashion, and all their results, from the Fifth Avenue house, which looks more like Sypher's shop than like a home, to the cottage bestrewn with silly paintings, Japanese fans, coarse pottery, and ribbon bows—all these have been signs of a most happy change, heralds of a promising advance. They mark the time when indifference to ugliness passed away; the period they illustrate is the first within the memory of living Americans when a desire for beauty in the home has been genuine and widespread. It is not wonderful that a desire so new should have failed at first to find the right expression, or even the right road towards expression. It is natural that we should have thought at first, not of art, but of "decoration," and should have employed "dec-

orators" instead of artists; or, when forced to depend on ourselves, that we should have studied, not the eternal canons of beauty, but some novel, superficial doctrine of "household beauty." I do not wish to imply that among our decorators there have been no artists, or that none of their work is well adapted to aid the beauty of our homes. I mean merely that we have given primary rank to secondary things, and wrongly employed the talents at our disposal. We have thought that a mass of beautiful minor things might make the one large beautiful thing we wanted. Sometimes we have even bought our things first, built a house to hold them, and been surprised if the result lacked coherence, meaning, individuality, and charm. Of course the way in which many of us live—camping in hired houses—has had much to do with twisting our perceptions of true beauty. Necessity rather than choice has often limited us to the effort to disguise the architectural sins of those who had not built with our tastes in mind. But we have been too well satisfied with the result, have misconceived its character, and carelessly imitated it when getting houses of our own.

However, this stage, too, is passing away.

We are learning that all art is one, that no sharp line can be drawn between what is decorative and what is not, and that things which are less than "artistic" cannot be properly "effective in decoration." We are learning that we may show our love for art otherwise than by "collecting," and may create our homes in better ways than by turning them into museums. We are learning that the essence of all beauty is *design*; that a clear, coherent idea should underlie every effort; that to get a beautiful house we must build it beautifully and furnish it in a harmonious way.

And very beautiful houses have been built in America of late, from city homes that are little palaces to modest country cottages which are none the less sensible for being eminently picturesque. As a rule our country houses are the best. Here we are most successful because at once most rational and most individual, least conventional and imitative, least beset by the desire for mere display or for mere collecting. Here we have most frequently asked for just what we wanted, and wanted things of a sensible kind. Here our native desires and tastes most genuinely express themselves, and we find the buildings we should prefer

to show a foreigner as both very American and very good. Of course here and there in our cities we may pick out a building which equals our best country homes in true excellence, and surpasses them by far in pure architectural importance. But I am speaking now of classes of buildings, and I am sure we have a better right to be proud of our country homes as a class than of our municipal structures, our churches, our business blocks, or anything else that is ours. Naturally, we may be glad of the fact in view of their typical, representative character. To have begun well in the buildings which most clearly show the desires and aims of the American people as a whole entitles us to hope for future success along all other architectural paths.

Let us see now whether we can guess from the character of our new homes in what direction these other paths may lead us. If anything that can be called an American style has yet given signs of itself, we ought to read them here; and if we find them here we should at least reflect upon their possible prophetic value. Of course no one can predict how an "architecture of the future" may develop, because the world of to-day, fed on much knowledge, keen

criticism, wide appreciation, and amateur theoretical preaching, is very different from those old artistic worlds where men knew only the work of countries close at hand, had small antiquarian reverence or æsthetic sympathy for the work of their predecessors, and did their own work in an instinctive, untheoretical, boldly creative way. Perhaps there will never again be a period when all architects shall build in the same spirit, when one style shall rule in great works and small until, carried to its logical end, it shall form the soil for another development as wide-spreading and harmonious. Perhaps when American architecture eventually does its best, it will build—as it does to-day—things of a hundred different sorts. But I do not think so. I might give many reasons, all seeming to point towards harmony if not absolute unity as an unalterable condition of architectural triumph. But I have only time to cite the evidence of one fact—the fact that in our house-building we have even now begun to agree upon something which may be called a style.

Many of our new country homes, if we look at their outside only, seem to be built in no style at all, being quite devoid of ornament, dependent for their effect on mass



and outline only, and differing in mass and outline from any Old-World models. But look inside. Here there must be some degree of ornament if the house is more than a cabin, lodge, or studio built for a half-camp-like mode of life. If it is very sumptuous we may possibly find that, while much attention has been given to architectural styles, no one style predominates; we may see a Moorish room, a Japanese room, a Louis Quinze room, a seventeenth-century Dutch room, and perhaps even a Gothic room, forming a house to which it would be hard to give a name. But in almost all cases the rooms are similar in conception, or, at least, if one or two are different they are immediately recognized as fanciful interpolations in a generally consistent scheme. And this scheme is based upon some form of that great development of art which we call Renaissance.

The name is a broad one. It covers all the work done in all the four centuries which elapsed between the perishing of Gothic art and the birth of the brief neo-Greek movement less than a hundred years ago; and during those centuries art was very much alive, and therefore developed and modified itself persistently. But, throughout, all

men worked together as the current ideal changed, and all sub-styles were united by one characteristic, determining thread—the use in modern, variously reorganized, and transmuted ways of motives drawn from classic art.

Our home interiors, with few exceptions, now show our allegiance to Renaissance ideals. But if no more than this could be said it would not mean unity or even true harmony in impulse and results. More than this, however, can be said. They show our allegiance to those earlier, purer types of Renaissance work which best deserve the name, and, indeed, when we speak with exactness, are the only ones we call by it in contrast to such later sub-styles as the “Palladian,” the “Louis Quatorze,” the “Louis Quinze,” the “Queen Anne,” and so forth.

But, you may ask, how long will this agreement last? Does not our brief architectural history show that fashion in styles is scarcely more permanent with us than fashion in clothes? Ten years hence may we not all be agreeing upon something that we do not especially care for to-day, or, just as likely, again agreeing to disagree?

Perhaps so; but I think we may at least

cherish a pretty strong doubt. I think a promise that our present preference will endure may lie in the fact that it has been instinctively rather than self-consciously developed. For does not this mean that we have chosen as we could not help choosing? We have not been impelled to build in this way by a mere theoretical consideration of the abstract claims of different styles, or by the persuasive words of any critical writer, or even by the example of any one conspicuous architect. While trying with an impartial hand a dozen different ways of designing, we have hit, almost without knowing it, upon one that really serves. We now build almost all our houses in one fashion, not because we fancy it may be the best for us, but because in a keen competition it has actually proved the best.

It is instructive just here to remember that the only architect who has profoundly affected the American profession and public threw his influence against the style which, in domestic building, nevertheless prevails. We prefer Renaissance houses in spite of the fact that all Richardson's work had a distinctly Romanesque or Byzantine character. Under the immediate sway of his impressive personality and his magnificent talent, half

the profession turned into his path with assured or stumbling steps; and the public, hitherto uninterested by architectural matters, showed a surprisingly strong interest in the new departure. Here, it seemed to us, lay the mine which our artists should work if an American style was to be born. Here were materials essentially novel, unquestionably attractive to the majority, and seemingly plastic enough to be moulded with the versatile touch that modern building problems require. Could anything more "original" be expected in these latter days of art? Could anything more pleasing to the public eye be found; or anything that might give a freer hand to the inventiveness which American architects have always shown, and which, we believe, needs only to find the right channel to show itself as creative power? Thus many of us thought, and thus, I confess, some of us made bold to write.

But meanwhile, as we were trying to devote ourselves to Romanesque art, we did devote ourselves, in the branch where our work is most spontaneous, to art of a very different kind. It is not yet six years, remember, since Richardson died, and only sixteen since his influence began to be felt.

We have not developed the seed he sowed, got tired of its flower, and in a spirit of reaction turned to another seed-bed for the materials of another "fashion." We have simply strayed away while thinking that our eyes were fixed upon him as our leader. It seems as though we must have confounded those underlying qualities of his work which proved him a great architect with those more superficial ones which expressed his personal feeling for a certain style. We thought he had shown us the virtues of the Romanesque style when what he had really shown us was the difference between weak, confused, commonplace, trivial buildings and buildings instinct with vigor, individuality, and beauty. We are not likely to forget his teaching with regard to the essentials of good architecture: in a greater degree than any one can estimate it has affected and will affect the work of the whole profession, the appreciative power of the whole public. Nor do I think that even as regards style his influence will be entirely outlived. There is a much closer kinship between early Renaissance work and early mediæval work than between the former and Gothic work. The Renaissance styles followed immediately upon the Gothic, but

they were not based upon them. They were based upon a study of classic architecture, and so of course was early mediæval work. In calling our attention so strongly to Byzantine and southern Romanesque buildings, it seems as though Richardson may have unlocked a forgotten treasure-house wherein the designers of future days will find inspirations and lessons which will enable them to make of modern Renaissance art something fresher, more individual, and more plastic than they would have produced had this great architect never lived. If they remember merely how he showed that ornamentation may be executed in intaglio as well as in relief, and that strong effects of contrasted color are admirably suited to our bright sunshine and clear atmosphere, his choice of style will have had a conspicuous influence upon American art. But even the current work of Richardson's own pupils shows that we can hardly expect, as we did a dozen years ago, that Romanesque art will eventually rule in the land. Some of them certainly follow in his path with hearty enthusiasm. But very far away from it have travelled others, designing, for example, the new Public Library in Boston, the Madison Square

Garden, and the Judge Building in New York.

It would be interesting to inquire a little into the nature of Renaissance art as revealed by history and by current practice, and to explain some of the reasons why it has proved itself the best for our domestic use at least. But just now I can only ask a final question, leaving it unanswered as one which deserves to be thought about, but can be authoritatively settled by Time alone:

If, almost unconsciously, we are coming to agree upon a style for our domestic work, and if in our domestic work we most clearly and truthfully express ourselves, should we adopt this style in all other departments of architecture? Are we taught by a study of our homes that Renaissance art is the true art for modern men in America as well as in France, and that upon it will be based our "American architecture" if future conditions and native abilities ever combine to develop such a product?

## SOME WORK OF THE "ASSOCIATED ARTISTS."

BY MRS. BURTON HARRISON.

THE wave of popular decorative art has broken over us and receded. With it have gone the sticks and straws of incompetency. Away floats many a fond illusion of whilom artists, who have reluctantly lived to see their blurred ideals piled high on the cupboard shelf, or bestowed upon the married maid-servant intending house-keeping. Torn from the pedestal where so long it stood upon one weary leg, the immemorial stork has gone down the stream in company with sunflowers and apple-blossoms in every stage of experimental presentment.

In plain words, the decorative "craze" has had its day. Amateurs no longer creep in where artists dare not tread. The legitimate adorners of our homes breathe a long sigh of relief. The field is theirs. What happily remain with us of the stimulating period just past are a more enlightened



taste in all these matters and a more impartial understanding of æsthetic law. Stripped though they are of home-made faience and pre-Raphaclite crewel-work, our houses bear internal evidence of a hundred decorative fancies, well imagined and fitly applied. To know how to adjust the things we have is of far greater value than to know how to yearn for those we have not. This naturally applies to those who have followed, as a fashion, what they style "decorative art." To the earnest workers, especially among women, what a boon has it not been? Of the various schools established in New York, beginning with the noble Society of Decorative Art, all have been successfully and honorably maintained, while to reckon up the benefits they have conferred upon the self-helpers of our country at large would be a task of magnitude. The roots of every one of these large establishments where the decorations of life are considered to the exclusion of its necessities, strike deep and far into the soil fed by our national industries.

A few years ago a little band of artists of New York, headed by Mr. Louis C. Tiffany, determined to inaugurate a new era in house decoration, where each member of the ad-

visory firm should be a specialist of skill and ripe culture. This was done; and the results they have brought about may, without exaggeration, be called the first-fruits of the American Renaissance. Very little was attempted by the association to secure the attention of the public that throngs and wonders. Their work, principally executed to beautify certain elaborate interiors, has been hurried by the owners from work-room or atelier into jealous seclusion as soon as it was finished. The curtain for the Madison Square Theatre, decorations for the beautiful interior of the Church of the Divine Paternity, for the Union Club House, and for the picturesque Veterans' Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory, were almost the only exhibits of their industry known to New York until the exhibition of embroideries in the Loan Collection of December, 1883, held in aid of the Pedestal Fund for Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty. Then was displayed a series of bold and original needle-woven tapestries, before which the artist world paused to do homage, as the most decided advance in needle-work known to the century. Of this tapestry a full description will be given further on. Since the earlier work mentioned the artists have

been enabled, by repeated efforts in combinations, through advanced skill on the part of their work-people, and with successful development of native industries, to show continual progress in all these departments. In their hands wood, metals, glass, mother-of-pearl, gold and silver, canvas, silk, serge, "cloth o' gold and cloth o' frieze," dyes and pigments, threads of silk and gold and wool, have been alternately treated to the action of tool, brush, or needle, and dismissed bearing unmistakable evidence of their artistic birthplace.

In this development of combined industries it was soon found that the department of tapestries and embroideries had assumed a character of distinct national and commercial importance, requiring for development certain conditions materially hindered by an association for the production only of combined forms of decorative work. After three years of co-operative study and fruitful experiment it was decided, therefore, to detach this department of artistic needle-work, allowing it to convene a new group of artists having taste and gifts especially adapted to its growth. The original scheme of the enterprise was continued under the name of Louis C. Tiffany & Co.,

its offshoot retaining the impersonal title of Associated Artists, as better suited to the requirement of an enterprise under feminine control. Of these artists themselves it is permitted me to say little. That the association is directed and inspired by Mrs. Wheeler, Miss Dora Wheeler, and Miss Rosina Emmet, is to Americans an earnest of the results attainable, as well as an explanation of those attained. And it is pleasant to record here a tribute to the progressive excellence of the designs furnished by Miss Ida Clark, formerly a pupil, and now an active worker in the councils of the Associated Artists.

It is in the blending of art and manufacturing industry that we Americans are vitally interested, and we shall now see how far into this fresh field the footsteps of a few brave women have led the way. One who is fortunate enough to possess an open-sesame to the modest dark green portal in East Twenty-third Street behind which the Associated Artists conjure into existence so many marvels will at the outset be forcibly struck by the fact of the growth in American taste making such an establishment not only possible, but remunerative. Here, under Mrs Wheeler's inspiring rule, are pro-

duced the beautiful pieces of embroidery of which this paper designs to treat. To describe the furniture, inlay-work, ceilings, wall-papers, panellings, parquetry floors, and glass mosaics originating in the fertile brain of Mr. Tiffany and his coadjutors in the ateliers of Fourth Avenue close by would be a chapter apart.

Now that the reign of stuffs has asserted itself in our homes—when we sigh before a yard of imperial yellow damask, and caress a bit of plush as a lover might the cheek of his fair one, singing them over like honest Autolyeus with his inkles, caddisses, cambrics, lawns, “as they were gods or goddesses”—it will be a satisfaction to the unsympathizing to hear the practical side of this enthusiasm.

Remembering the gallant struggle made, during the last twenty years especially, by the silk weavers of the United States, who have tried in the face of so many obstacles to obtain for their products footing with imported goods, it is pleasant to record to their honor an unqualified success. One of the first problems the Associated Artists set themselves to encounter was how to lighten the cost and extend the variety of silk and woollen stuffs. American women have, as a

rule, withheld their patronage from American silks; but it is safe to say that any one examining the recent products of Connecticut and New Jersey looms, woven to the order of the Associated Artists, after designs furnished by them, will go away repenting past omissions, and zealous of future purchase. These fabrics include filmy "India" silks, silk sail-cloths of great lustre and durability, silk canvases, and damasks like those in which Paul Veronese clothed his golden blondes.

For hangings of all kinds, and for "picture" dresses, these materials are not to be surpassed. The designs, where a pattern is employed, are admirable, and the tints supplied range from silver-white to amber, gold, and orange, from blush-pink to copper and pomegranate, with many greens and blues, in some cases intermingled, as in the gown bestowed on Enid by Earl Doorm,

"Where, like a shoaling sea, the lovely blue  
Played into green."

Not satisfied, however, with producing stuffs to exchange for the plentiful shekels of American plutocracy, the artists have wisely carried their experiments into the re-

gion of cheap materials. One result is a fabric of raw silk, serving to utilize the waste of costlier webs, and dyed in the skein, in varied tints of the same color, giving it when woven all the effect of the Eastern hand-dyed, hand-woven stuffs so much admired. This is sold at a very moderate price. Chintzes and cottons receive as much care in the design as their expensive brocades, and Kentucky jean or denim has been known to take upon itself the semblance of Oriental drapery for wall or door. A sort of dado of this homely dark blue stuff (so familiar to the eyes of Southern or of Western people in the common garments of their negro population) has been decorated with interlaced rings of chestnut plush, a space on the wall above covered with blue and white striped awning stuff, and the frieze painted in reds and pinks above. Always design is studied with reference to use. A woven stuff designed by Miss Ida Clark for the hangings of a palace car has for its pattern a peal of bells, scattered as if driven by the wind, with a border of coupled car wheels, and drifting smoke between.

Thus it will be seen that the æsthetic house-keeper ambitious to adorn her room of state, the modest mother of a household

who can spare this much and no more for a thing of beauty in her home, and the embroiderer seeking fresh fields for the vagaries of her needle, need no more look to sources over the sea for their material.

Embroidery silk, to take the place of fil-  
oselle, is another industry of this busy hive. Brilliant as floss, it is expected that in time this silk will cost less than imported fil-  
oselle.--

To properly classify the methods of embroidery used by the Associated Artists, I have no hesitation in placing at the head of the list a needle-woven tapestry illustrating a distinctly new departure in decorative needle-work, which will probably take the name of the originator, and be known to collectors of the future as the Wheeler tapestry. A brief history of this work, secured to Mrs. Wheeler by letters patent both in America and England, may prove of interest to my readers.

For some years past Mrs. Wheeler has been experimenting in varieties of stitches applied to varieties in material, while aiming to produce an embroidered surface which should possess all the softness of painting in water-colors, yet have the enduring quality of ancient hand-wrought tapestries. To



find a suitable ground for such work proved her main difficulty, and it was only while standing by the Jacquard loom one day watching the progress of a bit of silk-weaving to her order, that she observed one portion of the design suggesting the very arrangement of threads so long desired. A discarded remnant of imperfect texture was found having the idea still better carried out for her purpose. This was made to serve as a model for the new silk canvas, which was promptly put under way.

The result is a stuff woven of three shades of color (as, for instance, in the olive canvas, black, light green, and dark green), having a raw silk back, with silk warp and face. It resembles, in effect, "laid-work," or "conching," as seen in the grounds of so many old embroideries, as well as that variety of decoration recently revived under the name of "Queen Anne's darned-work." Next followed a series of experiments in stitches to preserve the elasticity of the textile, while allowing the introduction of additional warp-threads without changing the plane of the surface.

The method of working this tapestry finally adopted may be best understood by calling to mind the much-neglected domes-

tic art of stocking darning, which, in these days of machine-made hosiery, has been tossed into the waste-basket of oblivion. This homely stitch is still seen in some Turkish embroideries, and was once made famous by old Flemish workers, as well as by those of Italy and Germany. In the Wheeler tapestry the darned threads are carried across either the woof or warp of the ground, according to the desired effect of texture, and are *not* crossed by a returning thread, as in ordinary basket darning. When finished it is difficult even for a practiced eye to discern how they have apparently become incorporated with the stuff. The impression gained is that of a vignette, where the atmosphere fades into the ground tint of the stuff. In many cases the last range of stitches is supplied by using the ravelled silk of the original material.

The general effect of color aimed at in these needle-work pictures is flat, but the artist who continually oversees them while under the worker's hand cannot resist a suggestion of light or shadow here and there, a deepening of tone in the hollow of a plait or fold, a loving touch of the brush, as it were, supplying the gradations of tint that transform a lifeless surface of needle-work into a

spirited portrayal, as by pigments, of some form of natural beauty. What will no doubt recommend it to the artistic amateur is that there are no fixed rules for the stitches to be taken. Wherever, by changing the direction of them, a good effect can be rendered, it is done unhesitatingly. But, at the same time, experienced workers will see how impossible would be the undertaking of such a labor as one of these tapestries without constant supervision from the eye of a trained artist.

After the design is sketched upon the canvas, a strong outline in silks is supplied, unlike that made with the brush in china-painting in that it precedes instead of finishing the work. The worker is supplied with a carefully colored sketch of the subject, and some idea of the labor necessary to complete a piece of this tapestry may be gained from the fact that the "atmosphere" alone, surrounding a breezy nymph now being clothed with substance upon the frame, will require to perfect it fully four months' time of a steady work-woman.

The most conspicuous achievement in hand-wrought tapestry yet sent out by the Associated Artists, and certainly the most important order in needle-work ever exe-

cuted in this country, is the Vanderbilt set of wall-hangings already alluded to as having excited favorable notice in the recent Loan Collection at the Academy of Design. These tapestries, eleven in number, were executed after designs from Miss Dora Wheeler, representing phases of life in its holiday aspect. They include groups of dancing figures; an Undine seated beneath the curve of a wave holding a shell, from which drop garnered pearls; her comrade, a creature of the air, summoning birds, which come swiftly at her call; nymphs with musical instruments; amorini swinging upon ropes of roses, or playing at hide-and-seek amid flowers; together with a design full of poetic beauty, entitled "The Birth of Psyche."

To supplement these tapestries are portières and window curtains of a pale greenish-white satin, with underlet appliqués of other pale-hued silks, conveying to the surface a peculiar opaline effect. Over this is embroidered a prodigal variety of roses dropping from the stems in their plenitude of bloom and color. Most of these roses are drawn from sketches made while on a winter journey in the South, and are pleasant chronicles of life in the bowery haunts of the Carolinas and of Florida. The work

bestowed on them is no artistic sleight-of-hand, where the needle flies, Atlanta-like, across the plain, but is the perfection of close embroidery, the old *opus plumarium*, or feather-stitch, resembling the overlapping plumage of a bird.

This brilliant use of roses in their natural shape and color naturally suggests the much discussed question of conventionalizing flower forms for the purposes of ornamental design. In the practice of this association a plant rarely has to be twisted or perverted from the lines of beauty conferred on it by nature. When it is desired to decorate a given surface, the flower or plant chosen is found to be one entirely in harmony with its surroundings. It is placed finally only after consideration of it in all its relations to texture, color, and ultimate purpose.

The same nice care follows the piece of embroidery to its destination in the home. And in this connection I may quote some recent sayings of a distinguished art critic regarding the achievements of the association: "Their exhibition has a distinct importance in the development of decorative art, which, if we ever have it fitly applied to our domestic arrangements, must be indigenous. The conditions of life and light,

manner of living and housing ourselves, differ so widely from the corresponding conditions in any other country that they can never be adequately met except by a decoration which grows up to them and fits them. It is easy to understand that what suits perfectly the gray and lightless sky of England, and the comparative gloom of its in-doors, or the system of furnishing which accords properly with French social and domestic surroundings, will jar with ours. When the American decorator finds his tone and style, and the women of our cultivated society learn that what is 'killing' on the boulevards is garish on Broadway, we shall have made the first step in an escape from artistic provincialism. The Associated Artists are helping us to this much-to-be-desired end."

Apart from the now famous tapestries embroidered for Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt, the Associated Artists have completed several other important examples of the Wheeler tapestry. A set of wall panels and window curtains wrought in opalescent tints for a London drawing-room were lately shown, before being packed for shipment, to a few appreciative friends. A large hanging, arranged from Le Roux's painting of the "Are-

na" by Miss Ida Clark, was exhibited at the Loan Collection; and there is now in process of completion at the rooms a charming curtain, designed by Miss Rosina Emmet, having for subject the figure of Ruth carrying a sheaf of wheat beneath her arm. The color of the drapery in this example is extremely subtle, and the hand is tempted to pass caressingly over its graceful folds before doubting Thomas can be made fairly to believe that needle, not brush, has brought to pass this wonder. Another delightful example is a study by Miss Dora Wheeler of a nymph and Cupid at a fountain, charming alike in design and color.

In the department of appliqué embroidery the Associated Artists have originated many interesting pieces of work. One of their earliest efforts was a portière for the Veterans' Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory, made of dull Japanese brocade, bordered with plush representing leopard-skin. Upon the main space of the curtain are worked square appliqués of velvet, each one embodying some design suggesting the days of knighthood and romantic warfare. The intermediate spaces of the brocade are covered with overlapping rings of steel, to represent a coat of mail.

For the solace of those pathetic wanderers from home compelled to seek the shelter of a club-house, the artists have invented more than one noteworthy piece of decorative embroidery. Among those at the Union League is a large curtain for the library window. This is made of cloth of gold, and is framed in massive plush. Upon the central panel is embroidered a net, in whose meshes are entangled fish with jewelled scales. At intervals the stuff is cut from beneath the fish, leaving, when the curtain hangs against the light, the effect of an illuminated transparency.

A favorite bit of embroidery is known as "The Sermon." On a curtain of ordinary brown holland appear appliqué disks containing groups of field flowers, bees, or butterflies, with connecting traceries of silk thread. It was devised as a reminder no less than a proof of the fact that true art in needle-work depends not upon stuffs and mere externals, but upon the worker's artistic intuition. This delicate admonition is enforced by the materials employed to produce this pleasing result in decoration, none of them soaring beyond the ranks of ordinary use, or exceeding the possibilities of the humblest worker.



Thus it will be seen that although appliqué-work in the original form is classed among the antiquities of needle lore, the Associated Artists have contrived to throw around it a mantle of originality. In every case their aim has been so to bring together differing shades and differing textures that the result might be a scale of color otherwise unattainable. Even the same tones of the same color have been made to produce a difference in tint through the combination of varying textures.

And so, in other branches of needle-work, the artists have continually striven to make the development of color schemes depending upon the inspiration of the worker a distinguishing characteristic of their productions.

An attractive corner in the rooms of the association is that occupied by the ancient dower-chests, now made to serve for storing hoards of thin stuffs used for lighter draperies.

These diaphanous materials seem peculiarly in harmony with poetical designs for outline tracery, and are intended to be hung against the light, upon the glass of vestibule door or drawing-room window.

## WALL-PAPERS, CEILINGS, AND DADOS.

BY SUSAN N. CARTER.

ONE of the best analyses of Art-principles that has been published for many years on ornament, by Charles Blanc, dwells on the few simple underlying ideas which apply to all decoration. The author says, in the opening chapter of his work, that "just as the twenty-six letters of the alphabet have been and will be sufficient to form the words necessary for the expression of all human thought, so certain elements, susceptible of combination among themselves, have sufficed and will suffice to create ornaments, the variety of which may be multiplied indefinitely." In fact, all the methods which have been devised for the decoration of the person, the house, or gardens, or public buildings, owe their existence to the five principles of "Repetition, Alternation, Symmetry, Progression, and Confusion."

The truth of this analysis by the French

artist-philosopher will be recognized when we consider two or three of the illustrations he gives to show his meaning. He says: "Any form, however insignificant in itself, becomes interesting by repetition: at first, because the artist by repeating it forces us to take notice of it, and reveals an intention which would have escaped our observation without this repetition; and, next, because number often suggests thoughts which unity would not have originated."

"Alternation" affects the mind like a more complicated repetition; and "if a circle be placed after a square, and this is repeated a certain number of times, the effect upon the mind much resembles the progression of the figures in the Greek fret, or the successive curves of the Vitruvian scroll."

Symmetry and Progression are modifications of the two preceding principles, while Confusion becomes orderly by contrast with set figures, as when groups of people in varied attitudes are alternated with rows of pillars. Charles Blanc most imaginatively remarks that "the dull square, the hard and frigid cube, become ornamental when set in a row." While in music the same principle appears in the "rhythm, that is to say, the repetition, accelerated or diminished, of a

sound with vibration or without. The tolling of a bell, sounding for a long time the same note at equal intervals, may produce a profound and solemn impressiou ;” and “when we survey the ancient monuments of Egypt, abounding as they do in colored reliefs or surface-paintings, we are often arrested by a group of figures in simultaneous and rhythmical action, all executing the same gesture and the same sign. When this action is not purely material, such as leading animals, threshing out corn, or carrying bricks ; that is, when it is in harmony with the sentiment, and expresses, for example, worship or prayer—this rhythmic movement partakes of a religious character, and the repetition of the gesture seems to bring it within the pale of sacred rites. The spectacle becomes solemn, nay, almost sublime.”

“ As these principles, when we reflect upon them, appear so simple and at the same time so full of meaning, we can easily see how in the ornament of a dress a row of daisies constantly repeated gives its own character to the garment, while little triangles on a wall-paper have their character of repose, and, in the more ambitious work of the landscape-gardener, long rows of trees, forming

vistas in park or avenue, have their distinctive artistic meaning.

Taking up these simple ideas as applying to the adornment of life, we shall dwell on them in articles on the decoration of our rooms, the ornaments, whether in embroidery, or carving, or jewels for our persons, and shall endeavor to show how pleasant harmonies may be obtained both through form and color in the familiar objects which make up our daily external life.

Second to the adornment of our own persons, the background or foundation of the rooms which we inhabit is of great interest to us. Our circumstances determine if these backgrounds, which resolve themselves finally into wall-papers, shall be pleasant negative settings to the objects with which we fill our homes, or if the mural decorations shall themselves supply the lack of objects which our taste or our purse may have hindered us from collecting. It is of wall-papers as furnishing a background and relief to an assemblage of loved and familiar objects that we propose to treat in this paper.

Like all transient fashions of dress or ornament, where the material is comparatively cheap, nothing changes its patterns or its colors more constantly than wall-paper.

The frescos which adorned the old saloons in foreign palaces were often painted by distinguished artists, and the pictures and arabesques on ceiling and side-wall were also frequently done under their supervision. The rarity and costliness of these decorations insured their permanence, and we still see the same angels, cherubs, and historical paintings, in Italy and Germany, that generations have looked at for the last four or five hundred years.

But in the ordinary dwelling of the present day, and especially in this country, each new occupant of a house feels himself at liberty to choose the style of his wall-adornment, and the small expense attending it enables him to suit his own taste. We presume that nearly every one of our readers has noticed the change of impression made upon himself by the rearrangement or the addition or removal of furniture, pictures, or wall-paper, in an apartment with which he has been familiar. A dim, cosy sitting-room, full of odds and ends of prints, tables, easy-chairs, and bric-à-brac, needs but the different ideas of a new occupant to be transformed into a stiff, light, clean parlor; yet, the entire variation consists only in the substitution of a dove-colored paper, with-

out tone or richness of color, and hung at set intervals with steel engravings or ordinary photographs, for a brown, mellow-tinted wall, on which interesting etchings have previously been grouped. In the analysis, we find one room not more costly, more elegant, or more rare, than the other, but yet they are as distinct in the impression they make as two different individualities.

Nothing, in our familiar experience, excites homesickness more keenly than the dismantling of a room where our life is for the most part spent. An ordinary house-cleaning, which removes our paintings, book-cases, and hanging-shelves from the walls, produces a sense of loneliness that nothing but their gradual restoration after the cleaning is over can entirely efface; and we then sigh with pleasure when the space over the mantel-piece resumes its accustomed expression, and as one by one the books are on their shelves, and our old spot is itself again.

Wall-papers have a share in the comfort and pleasure of our daily life that pictures or ornaments scarcely can equal. We may dispense with the favorite painting, but the harmony or disagreeable tints and figures on the wall-paper are not to be evaded. They

either possess the richness and repose that fit them for a background to furniture, mirrors, or paintings, or their glaring, patchy colors kill the effect of the best pictures, and to many a nervous invalid render his hours intolerable, as he counts and combines over and over again the meaningless recurrence of a marked angle or curve, or the ever-repeated big, awkward rose or tiresome convolvulus.

A few years ago, before Eastlake had printed his book, many fine wall-papers were brought over here from France, in which delicate vines made a tangled mass of agreeable shapes, and covered a ground-work neutral in color like itself. The patterns were not exactly like those of the Morris papers, but so equally were the decorations and the under-tint balanced, that to the most sensitive eye, if they did not give positive pleasure, at least they produced no disturbance of the mind. But the American people in those days had not analyzed their impressions very much, and had not yet learned why such unobtrusive ornamentation is agreeable. They consequently were constantly led away by fearful forms and colors, and at that period bedrooms were the especially weak points, where all sorts



of ugly papers appeared. In the dwellings of the richest, the most intelligent, and the most tasteful people, in town or city, great pink peonies were scattered at set distances among bright-green leaves on a slate-colored groundwork in the best guest-chamber of the house.

The first principle that should be considered by the designer of a wall-paper is that the decoration of the sides of a room ought always to be a background, more or less rich, according to circumstances, for the men and women, furniture and ornaments, relieved against it. If this idea is kept in mind, a little knowledge and experience in combinations of color and figure will suggest arrangements of patterns on a wall-paper that will give a satisfactory result.

It is difficult in designing a pattern to make one that shall be equally agreeable for a large or a small room, because little groups of objects on a paper covering a limited space take pleasant general figures, which, if they are seen scattered over a large surface, make geometrical combinations that destroy the effect of the most attractive patterns examined in detail. As an illustration of this we recollect a pretty pattern of grasses and wheat-heads scattered so as

closely to cover a wall-paper, and the delicate figures made a gray net-work upon a light ground. At the first glance the tracery seemed without positive plan, beyond affording agreeable resting-points for the eye at stated intervals, where the wheat-heads focussed the tangle of slender leaves. But from further experience it became apparent that the grasses took large curved lines in a geometrical construction so positive that a sense of dizziness was the inevitable result of contemplating the paper for any length of time. Had the room been smaller, or the spaces more broken by doors or windows, these long, interlacing, wavy lines would have been unobtrusive or concealed; but, placed in an apartment twelve feet high and nearly twenty feet in length, they became uncomfortably prominent.

Japanese papers, so truly beautiful for screens, and so perfect of themselves as works of art, are frequently open to this objection. We recently saw a fine imitation of a Japanese paper-hanging composed of cream-colored and gold tints, the figures of which were on the basis of grouped circles. Nothing could be more agreeable than this paper when spread upon a screen, but on the walls of a drawing-room the emphasized

circle, which was the biggest and brightest object in the group, stuck out with dazzling prominence, to the destruction of the effect of any pictures or furniture placed against it.

It is well known that the basis of all Arabic or Saracenic decoration is geometrical; and that certain mathematical shapes, through a pattern, however completely they be concealed, are appreciated by the instinct, if not by the eye, as the real sub-structure. Japanese work appears to the ignorant as a very free rendering of Nature, and the grouping of the forms seems to be accidental; but no work in the world, if we except the compositions of the great masters, is so perfectly balanced as that of the Japanese in its masses of light and shade. A little concentrated bundle of lines or colors holds in its proper equilibrium a wandering vine or a flight of tiny birds or insects, or petals of flowers; and this small well-accented spot is always found to be the apex of a triangle or the intersection of a set of circles.

Such are some of the points to be considered in reference to figures, which reading and reflection will greatly amplify; and the designer will find that the grouping and arrangement, and the character of tints and

colors, have a still more important place in his scheme.

Looking over a vast number of paper-hangings a short time ago, the most potent fact we gathered from their survey consisted in the impression that the beauty of the papers arose much more from a successful combination of colors than from any special loveliness of design. We noticed many of the Morris patterns and others, where, in a small set of squares, grave and rich effects were produced by a skilful variety of tints of olive and bronze, here and there enlivened by small touches of pale red. Some of these little squares held leaves of plants, others simple circles, and others again some formal geometrical pattern. Yet the result of them all was one and the same, of a quiet and sheeny shadow, relieving against its rich hues positive tints in clothing, or bright china, or brilliant glass, as well as the people and furniture in the room. We imagined, as we contemplated this beautiful effect, how disagreeable the papers would be if, instead of pleasant secondary and tertiary tones of bronzes and gray reds and blues, a bright green trefoil had been contrasted on a scarlet background; and we thought whether any combination of line

would have charm where bright purple violets stared at us from orange undergrounds. Yet, until of late, such have but too generally been the colors and the contrasts which the papers in our rooms have forced upon us.

If these violent colors can destroy pleasing and refined shapes, they are much more repulsive when seen in combination with bad figures. The dreariness of an English bedroom, with its paper forty or fifty years old, on which great, staring bunches of ill-shaped flowers are daubed of every conceivable hue, comes to us as the most dismal point of any of our English experiences, which usually were so pleasant. These same bad papers can now be bought in nearly every "variety store" in any village in the United States, and they are found but too often in the bed-chambers and sitting-rooms of houses of the middle class, and in attics everywhere.

There are two or three old saws of "letting well enough alone," and "if you can't do well, don't do anything," etc., which apply especially to paper-hangings. Ever since we can remember, there has been an agreeable kind of paper so simple in its attempts at form and color that any one was sure to be pleased if he covered his walls

with it. These papers consisted of narrow, simple stripes, tiny clover-leaves, or it may be little star-shaped figures, gray or white, upon a background scarcely different from itself. A cool and pretty effect was always given to an apartment thus covered, and, if rich oil-paintings could not bear the contrast with so chilly a color, no headache was ever aggravated, no ornament was ever obscured by it. A paper so neutral was at any rate not positively offensive, and was the best of the common papers till the revival in taste and increased knowledge have introduced a higher and a more complicated standard.

In the present desire for designing, many people little experienced in drawing or painting are tempted by natural taste or by fashion to try their powers in making patterns of many kinds. In the Decorative Art Society in New York letters are constantly received from all parts of the country, saying that the writers would like to decorate china, cloth, and many other materials, but that they do not know on what general principles they should start. One of the most skilful artists of New York said recently to some young ladies to whom he was lecturing on china-decoration, that

if they did not know how to combine *many* tints, the best way was to take two and make the most of them. Before beginning to paint the experimenter would be facilitated in his work by taking various pieces of cloth of different hues; and having made a selection, first make one combination and then another of two of the shades till he could decide what best suited the intended design. As a general thing for wall-papers, the effect of cheerfulness and repose is a good aim for bedrooms; for a dining-room richness; and for a library solidity and gravity of tone; while light and airy effects are most adapted to the drawing-room. Glittering or sharp color should never be indulged in upon any wall-paper except in very small quantities.

Having decided upon his tints, which may be suggested—as reds, or reds and purples for a dining-room, bronze shades with slight points of yellow or gold for a library, slight soft shades of blue for bedrooms, and cream-colors mingled with a little gold for a drawing-room—the designer is next to consider the forms best adapted to his purpose, and for this he should constantly study the effect upon the eye of different classes of figures. Long, perpendicular lines, as it is well

known, lead the eye up and give an impression of height to an apartment that no other combination can realize. Figures whose predominating lines are horizontal lower the stud of a room; big, detached patterns at regular distances apart tire the eye and the mind with the constant tendency to count and recombine them; and, besides, they compete so powerfully with other objects on the walls, such as pictures and bric-à-brac, and they disturb the effect of background to people or furniture so completely, that this class of forms is perhaps of all classes the most to be condemned. The scintillating effect of small figures renders them perhaps the most suitable for wall-papers. Saracenic decoration is probably as perfect as any for covering large surfaces, and their arabesques being small, if not repeated continually, at any rate the geometrical figure which they make constantly recurs. A paper which is now much liked is composed on a basis so simple that nearly anybody with taste in such matters could work up an analogous design. The paper is first divided off into squares about four inches each way, and in one of these squares circles of different dimensions are first constructed; the inside



of the second one being edged with small half-circles that suggest, though vaguely, the terminations of the petals of a flower. The small rounds at either corner of the square serve to fill in and enrich the figure, and they carry out the decorative principle of covering all the surface. The opposite square of the paper is a composition from a triangle and modified circles, and the paper is tinted in two harmonizing hues of olive with concentrations of shadow, color, and faint edges of gold, which enliven and emphasize what might otherwise appear dead and meaningless.

It is easy to perceive on a slight analysis how many patterns which would produce the same general impression of mellow gray could be constructed on this scheme of form and color. Suppose the series of big circles were converted into four sets of small ones and stems or points similar to the end of the bell-like triangle connected them together, a group suggestive of conventionalized flowers would be the result, and produce an effect essentially like this one; while the big triangular figure somewhat resembling the profile of a flower in the pattern, with pointed leaves to its calyx,

might as easily and as successfully be combined into a group.

Another is made from much the same motive, except that broken sprigs of leaves closely fill in the surface, and balance by their mass the tint of the somewhat lighter background; while formal petals of the same relative size occupy intervening squares.

A very pleasant arrangement of color for a wall-paper may be suggested by copying the color of some material hung in folds, whose surface presents two shades, one warmer than the other where the light catches the prominent folds, or a deeper and mellower tint appears in the shadows. Such coloring as this is always in harmony, and if the effect can be still further enhanced by slight markings of gold corresponding to the highest lights on the material, we arrive at a result pleasant and unobtrusive. If the colors are shades of olive, the absence of any enlivening tint in the paper itself would render a deep border splashed with a rich and dark hue, such as crimson or green, both appropriate and effective. It would be well to observe in the two patterns given how a perfectly conventional form is the element of one, while in the second more freedom is given to the fancy by dropping over the lit-

the squares natural leaves or flowers, though care must be taken in such a case that the general effect of the whole, when seen from a distance, shall be of a net-work fine enough not to interfere with the large mass of the squares.

A third is a pattern somewhat more complicated than either of the preceding, and it combines in its general construction an octagon and a square. Many variations of the dividing lines could be suggested, but here the idea has been carried out of buttoning the forms together at their corners, as is so often seen in old grated windows, while the octagons are filled in by conventional roses, and by sprigs of rose-leaves arranged in a formal way. Any one with a little observation or knowledge of botany can generalize such forms by studying the way in which leaves grow on a stem ; whether they spring from a common centre, or if they alternate or stand opposite to one another. Designs are often seen where this want of observation of Nature is apparent, and plants are put on stiff, hard stalks, when wavy, vine-like stems are natural, and hollyhocks, or pinks, or sunflowers grow from the twining forms of a convolvulus or a melon. In the treatment of flowers, the designer should

study the general aspect of an open blossom, and notice if the outline it makes is scalloped, as in the rose, or pointed, as in the lily; after this, with a few generalized additions, as in the varied circles of the rose, if he does not produce a real imitation of a flower, he has given both in the leaves and the blossoms many of their large rudimentary elements. Used for such a subordinate ornament to a room as a wall-paper, which, as we said, should be considered merely as a retiring shadow or distance, such a pattern as this is in many respects more agreeable and more suitable than one covered with realistic and not decorative designs.

We come now to a class of wall - papers which are much in fashion, and are classed under the head of "Morris" papers.

The "spider-web" pattern contains a geometrical basis in the radiating lines of the spider-web, though it is inconspicuous. Over these faint little webs are spread out with no apparent regularity, suggestions of willow-leaves and branches of that tree in many different positions. The design contains varieties of the forms of willow-growths, without being exact portraits of them. The long, serrated flexible leaves, with the well-developed buds at their base,

are very characteristic, and in the stems the idea not only of form but of color is carried out by making them resemble the real willow, whose branches and leaves of the same hue we know so well in their moist, swaying tips and wavy branches. The color of the paper is in two shades of olive-green upon gilded spider-webs; brightness being given by following the suggestion of real willows, and making the buds and portions of the stems red, such as they appear in early spring. There is something very pleasant in the love of Nature displayed in this pattern, where the memory of the peculiarities of the tree is dwelt upon with such a fresh and loving appreciation. Character is given to the forms, which might otherwise be vague, by adding dark, broken lines to their edges. It would be well for a designer to recollect that, on this point, outlining any pale form with a darker tint causes it to appear darker. If a color seems too cool or too warm, an outline of a warmer or a cooler hue will help to bring the whole mass to the right key. As an instance, if a sky-blue ought to appear warmer, a purplish outline will greatly enhance its value; and the designer will find that an outline of a complementary color will have a very beautiful

effect. Looking at a small pattern like this "spider-web" design, it is impossible to discriminate whether any sets of its curves may assume an unpleasant prominence seen upon a large wall, but the lace-like way in which the figures closely cover the surface of the groundwork diminishes the danger of such an impression.

The "passion-flower" pattern does not appear to have any geometrical basis; but it is now a favorite paper-hanging, and, if it has Charles Blanc's principle of "Confusion" in it, so quiet and harmonious are the general forms and colors, that, with proper reliefs of large forms against it of drapery and pictures, it takes its place as an agreeable and negative background. The blank places are of the same general size as the flowers and leaves of the plant, and, without being genuine imitations, the flowers and growth have many of the leading forms of the passion-flower. The nearness, however, to which it approaches Nature makes it less refined and attractive as a piece of decoration than the willows in the "cobweb" pattern, which possesses the charm of memories of willows rather than the direct imitation of the tree itself.

While these papers are sufficient for the

covering of walls having a projecting or painted cornice, if the edges of the ceiling and side-wall come directly together, a connecting ornament is desirable. This link to bind the two is afforded by borderings. The subject of borders or cornices has been very variously treated, and cornices and friezes may consist of all sorts of devices, from the frieze with its panoramic processions of men and animals to very free naturalistic renderings of Nature, or there may be a strongly emphasized conventional border. On many plain-tinted walls we often see the upper edge dominated and enlivened by brilliant figures of all sorts, and where flat colors, reds, dark blues or greens, yellows or blacks, are used simply the effect on variously-grouped figures is often quite fine. Our readers will recall the Greek and the Pompeian wall-borders as adding elegance and interest to a room. Placed above the line where furniture or pictures break the surface, the border is the proper place on a wall-decoration for the designer to show his skill. We recollect a lovely hand-painted border of a room, where large stalks and sprays of plants, freely portrayed, were seen blown by wind, touched with sunlight, or graceful or formal, as their leaves

or flowers were projected upon the wall. But such cornice-borders as these can hardly be made of paper cornices, and the three patterns we suggest will illustrate a few varieties from which designers can readily take their elementary ideas. The simplest and most conventional of them all is varied in squares and oblongs, with a butterfly occupying the squares, and a flower, with many of the characteristics of a dahlia, the oblongs; and in the latter case the treatment of the subject is very similar to that followed in the willow-twigs of the cobweb pattern.

Another contains vine-leaves and bunches of grapes in pale robin's-egg-green, light bronze, and gilt. As we remarked before, border-papers can tastefully be made more positive in hue than the general shade of the paper; but, in this case, the tints are so delicate as to fit it either for the heading to a plain wall or the border of a very light paper. There is a border of birds and cherry-twigs in dark browns and gold, and the strength of contrast between the dark and light compensates for the lack of deep color; and it should be remembered that a striking effect can almost as readily be obtained from this method of dealing with



light and dark as from a dependence on strong tints; though for our own part the massing and contrast of harmonious and rich hues is more satisfying than any treatment of dark and light that can be devised; and this preference holds, we believe, with most persons who love color for its own sake.

These borders are somewhat limited in variety by the constant recurrence of the same design; and we would say, for those having a fertile imagination in designing, that the greater the number and variety of figures in a border the more it satisfies the æsthetic feeling. This variety can of course most easily be carried out in a hand-painted border, like the one we described, where every figure was unique; but this, of course, is nearly impossible for a printed pattern. We recall an imitated Japanese design, in two shades of tea-colors so similar as almost to correspond to the two tones of a moving surface, like water seen in light and shadow.

The sprigs of leaves and buds are slightly but characteristically indicated, and cover the paper with tolerable equality. There is less conventionality in this pattern, and, so far as tint goes, the effect must be suitable for a background to paintings or ornaments.

It has been said that anything to which fashion accustoms us soon becomes agreeable. A few years ago most people liked the degenerated rococo furniture in curved and twisted chairs and tables with their ornaments of scroll-work, which was corrupted and cheapened from the French cabinet-wares of the last century, and which was turned out in wholesale quantities by our machinery.

People thought they had taste at that time, and in truth they had as much as most people possess nowadays. Americans of late have travelled more than formerly, and besides have seen more good Art at home, which has enlarged the vision of their likes and dislikes. From this increased knowledge has arisen a great deal of talk about Art, but the present passionate desire for decoration is really as partial and nearly as baseless of truth as the fashions which preceded it. Genuineness of thought, honesty of purpose, and individuality of character, are scarcely more shown now in our rooms filled with Gothic and Eastlake furniture than they were when people bought tapestry carpets covered with gigantic roses and vines, or at the time when women filled up canvas with cats, dogs, and people in little square stitches in worsted-work.

Fashion has undoubtedly gone a step forward in the way of true principles, but as long as the basis of our house-decoration is *only* fashion, and does not proceed from reason and individual needs, Eastlake furniture and South Kensington embroidery are nearly as liable to end without result as is the obsolete rococo. But experience is a good teacher; and perhaps slender purses and greater general cultivation may help to evolve ideas that shall form a genuine basis of household Art. Fashion and variety have always ruled the world more or less, but the fixed national costumes of the peasantry of many countries of Europe, the permanent ornaments of savage nations which are the same to-day that they were five hundred years ago, and in the Oriental nations the same materials which make the same garments, such as shawls and carpets and pottery, hint to us that, either instinctively or rationally, people when they have satisfied the needs of their circumstances are sometimes content to retain their old habits and fashions.

We have assimilated the changing habits of the French, and because we had little time to think on such matters, and almost anything would answer the rude needs of a

new country, we have been content hitherto to alter our furniture and our garments year by year without regard to their real desirableness, and with an entire freedom that is almost without precedent in other countries, even where they habitually change their fashions.

But, now that we have new and in many ways more intelligent fashions, we must still remember that, until we have given them a real and positive basis in *ourselves*, they are only *fashions*, after all.

Most departments of our surroundings have received attention, and furniture, clothing, architecture, of the outsides, at any rate, of our buildings, have a certain style more or less handsome; and jewelry, table-furniture, and equipages are as fine in America, probably, as in any of the European countries. So, too, now our floors are as well carpeted, and our side-walls, if not as elegant as in the best European dwellings, at any rate are quite tasteful; but the ceilings of houses until recently have been left as the mason finished them, or they have been frescoed in many tasteless and tawdry styles by second-class German decorators.

From the nature of ceilings, the manner of finishing them is susceptible of a wider

range than the side-wall affords, however ornamental the latter may be. The reason of this is apparent when we consider that the ceiling is the only portion of an apartment which is not covered up or obscured by furniture and ornaments, and that on it the eye can rest undisturbed by surrounding objects. The repose which comes from a repetition of small figures and the brilliancy of effect of large pictures balanced by suitable surroundings, such as we see in one case in the small tessellated figures of the ceilings in Germany, and at the other extreme of decoration in the gorgeous and imposing ceilings of the Doge's Palace at Venice, or the top of the Sistine Chapel, are in various circumstances proper to ceilings, and the imagination can make an almost endless combination of effects in composing proper ceiling-decoration from the simplest to the most elaborate varieties. This opportunity gives a motive to the architect or the artist for the display of skill which would be partially or wholly wasted, were large sections of the wall broken up and neutralized by objects between it and the spectator. Before considering what sorts of decoration are best suited to our dwelling-houses it may be interesting to our readers to observe the

treatment of ceilings by some of the artists and architects of the past, from whom we gather many useful hints.

Taking the later Greek ceilings as we find them in what remains in the disinterred Pompeian houses, we discover that their main rooms were lighted by a large square opening in the top—for the houses were seldom more than one story high—and these openings afforded the light which is gained in modern buildings through side-windows. The brilliant skies of Italy flooded the large *atrium* or main room of these houses with a varying brightness, which was broken by colonnades in this main apartment, or dimmed in the recessed chambers which opened out from it. No system of lighting could be more effective in its *chiaro-oscuro* than this one; for, while the “dim religious light” of Gothic architecture is only soft and mysterious, that of these Greco-Roman houses varied all the way from the gorgeous sunshine that glittered on the *impluviums* or fountains on the floor below the top opening of the rooms to the shadowed chambers whose dusky frescos enriched but did not enliven the side-walls. We all know the Pompeian decorations on whose black or dull-red backgrounds Centaurs and Mino-

taurs, Cupids and Loves, are poised in the air in every position of grace.

But, on the sides of this skylight opening, the remains which yet exist enable us to reconstruct the ceiling, and we discover that the later Greeks were not content to adorn their walls and floors only with devices rich and varied, but that their ceilings also were equally elaborate. In the Pompeian dwellings we find them checkered and traversed in all directions by beams and lattice-work in many-colored variations from the natural tints of the wood which composed them. The sunken spaces between the beams were filled by painted and gilded rosettes, scroll-work, and other ornaments, which carried out to completeness the general decoration, and which occupied every space on side-wall and pavement.

But besides these regular figures adorning the wooden roofing of such apartments, if stucco or plaster constituted the finish of the little rooms surrounding the main hall, irregular patterns are discovered upon the stucco, in the midst of whose tender and light colors birds, butterflies, and small tendrils and vines give an effect of space and airiness to these rooms so mean in point of actual size.

This general character of the wall-decoration of the Greeks was very similar to that of Rome, where in the old exhumed ruins and on the ceilings of some of the Catacombs we find the same class of decoration. At a later date Raphael adopted this style in his scroll-work and arabesques on the walls of the Vatican, which he composed of vines and leaves, birds and winged insects, besides other forms of every curve and degree of grace.

In the Middle Ages this method of coloring ceilings was succeeded by the solid and more severe wainscot in wood left its natural color. The north of Europe more than anywhere else affords examples of a finish where common panels of polished oak and beams, either plain or carved, form the roofs of halls, churches, and houses. The smoky rafters, the blackened vaulting, and the dim recesses of many an old church come vividly to the imagination; and one's memory recalls too the mellow tints of the wood-work in the large and low rooms of German castles and English colleges built four or five hundred years since. But in more recent times intercourse with Italy and the East, and the influence of the vivid coloring of stained glass and the brilliancy of Saracenic



decoration made themselves felt, and to the dark, natural hues of the wood succeeded paint, rich and varied in tone. Here were ceilings painted with most vivid brilliancy, mingling their hues with gold, while arabesques and figured panels adorned the walls.

In all these designs the regular alternation or repetition of the figures produces, though from a different cause, the repose which is especially desirable in limited surfaces, and which many people suppose erroneously that plain color alone can give. The repose of repeated or alternated figures differs from that of a uniform surface or color, through being uniformity combined and enriched by variety, but in which the uniformity is still the predominant principle.

In Italy, in the sixteenth century, the beams of such buildings as the Ducal Palace at Venice were modified and made elaborate by scroll-work and gilding, to form magnificent frameworks to the pictures of the greatest of the old masters. Paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese look down at us from these ceilings, in which we see Venice represented as a preternatural being and enthroned as a conqueror; or her princes, priests, and doges filling high places in

church ceremonies, or taking part in the general councils of Italy.

But a great and substantial objection exists against such a style of pictorial decoration as this, unless it is done by the finest artists and used in empty halls, since its heaviness would otherwise be disagreeable, especially if the painting were not very good. The gold frames and strong colors of the pictures are oppressive in apartments where there are many other objects, and, even when the paintings are not very large, make moderate-sized rooms appear overloaded.

Between the Renaissance decoration and the decayed taste of the time of Louis XIV., little interesting work has been preserved. But in the eighteenth century we come to a style in which gilt and stucco and white paint held supreme sway in France. Fresco-painting also mingled with this gilt and white, and was vastly more popular than now, when stencilling and wall-papers are taking their place. Artists of the time of Louis XIV. were devoted to delicate tinting and fancy scenes, and to such as admire Watteau and his followers their work was beautiful.

But this class of decoration has now gone

by, and only its feeble echo remains, as we said in the beginning of this article, and we come to the present very recent development of artistic taste. As from the earliest periods wooden wainscot, with its polished boards and beams and rafters, has been the most natural and common sort of roof to apartments whether in Pompeian dwellings or English or German halls and castles, so the same idea of structural finish still maintains its hold; and ceilings divided off into squares or oblongs, and with the projecting forms of the wood-work gilded or colored in polychromatic tints—red, blue, yellow, and green—and with small scrolls and rosettes between them in the sunken spaces, again are popular.

Until lately good taste had been so little developed that it was agreed for dwelling-houses in general that a plain white-colored ceiling was the best. But at length we are beginning to learn that the black white wall may be relieved from its cold chilliness by a slight mixture of buff, or greenish, or some other hue, which gives a warmer and more agreeable tint to a room than simple white-wash. Papers, we find, are apt to be disagreeable for ceilings, since their glazed surface disturbs the eye by preventing the

vision from resting on, or rather seeming to penetrate, the surface of the color. But notwithstanding the general impression among inexperienced persons that white is to be preferred for the cleanness of the tint, and that its purity gives a sense of space, artists know well that in reality light blue is the most ethereal color, and may become exceedingly so by mixing with it a little gray, not too dark. Should we desire to make an atmospheric distance in our ceilings, this color would therefore be preferable to pure white. But these are the simplest considerations in treatment, and any color may be used provided its masses are small and the shade so light as to give the impression of a flickering depth above our heads.

But though these pale-tinted walls are unobjectionable and pleasant in their way, and, besides, are quite different in their effect in a room from ceilings frescoed in aerial perspective, we believe that it is a false taste which insists that a ceiling should appear to recede so as to lose its solidity. The idea that it ought to produce a feeling akin to the firmament, to which no bounds are set, and that it should have a sense of unlimited space, seems to us both dreary and without true basis. We are persuaded, from long

thought and observation, that the top of a room ought to produce the impression of a *real* roof over our heads, to shield us from sun and rain; and that, unless the wall is so low as to intrude uncomfortably on our consciousness, designs, larger or smaller, darker or lighter, according to the character of the apartment, are more pleasant than a cold and empty space over our heads, from the contemplation of which the eye and the mind alike shrink disconcerted.

To-day enlightened architects, well read in the ideas and needs which constituted the basis of the old decoration, are applying the same general principles which were used then to meet the present decorative needs, of which that of ceilings forms a feature. The first thought of a decorator is to study the style of his room, and, whatever be its form, to adapt the colors and the general character of the ornament to its structural requirements.

The Roman, Italian, and Greek architecture, as we have seen, had their own differences, and the Gothic, Renaissance, and Queen Anne styles theirs also, which was each suitable for its own kind of rooms. Our buildings have other aims, and the tasteful architect, though he always plans

his decoration to follow broadly the type of the architecture in which the room is modelled, at the same time remembers the various conditions of climate and social arrangement which should modify all ornament. The exact designs of former periods ought scarcely ever to be reproduced; and our architects, while mastering the characteristics of the old styles, and adopting modifications of what is suitable in them, are often introducing novel elements both in England and this country, which give their decoration both dignity and beauty.

In finishing a modern apartment, the first improvement in the old and tasteless methods would be to omit the stucco centre-piece from the ceiling. These centre-pieces are generally in bad taste, and rarely does a room look so well with as without them. For a simple finish, a painted or stencilled pattern repeating itself in every direction is excellent.

There is no reason, however, why a ceiling may not be more elaborate as long as it preserves a character of balance and lightness in its tracery. A large frescoed centre, with corners to correspond, is in many ways more agreeable, and indicates a more cultivated judgment than one with very simple and often repeated designs.

The colors of a ceiling preferred by decorators of the best taste consist of flat tints, in which no shading would give the suggestion of elevations or hollows in any part. Should the top-wall have real joints or beams cutting its surface, the decoration can be of a very individual character. The bottoms of the beams might be covered with a running pattern, such as the Greek 'key, and the sides of the beams could have either another running pattern or one with an upward turn, while between the joints a diaper or a star, or small squares, could be formed, to hold in the latter case ornamental figures of various kinds.

Simple conventional patterns in blue and cream color, or blue and white, are sure to look well. These may be painted with a black outline, though the outline makes the pattern look somewhat heavy; but, should it be desirable to hang large chandeliers from the middle of the room, this increase in the apparent strength of the wall is an advantage. Designs of this sort may be made in wall-paper, if cheapness is necessary, rather than to have hand-painting or stencilling, but we have given the reasons before why papers are unsatisfactory. Gold ornaments on a blue ground, and

with black outlines, are also rich and handsome.

A very pretty ceiling may be made by those desiring the idea of a vaulted roof by placing pale cream-colored stars on a deep blue ground, or pale blue ones on a cream-colored wall. In an ordinary-sized room these stars should vary in size from about one inch in diameter to three inches; the large stars having six points, and the smaller ones three. If the stars of different sizes are intermixed, but are at the same time disposed at equal distances, the impression is agreeable, and this arrangement is much in favor with the Japanese. The stars should be smaller if placed on a dark ground than on a light one, since a strong contrast renders objects more conspicuous, and thus disturbs the relative size of the background and the ornament. If each star have an outline somewhat darker than itself, a yet more brilliant effect will be the result; though, as the tone of our suggestions indicates, conspicuous effect on ceilings is scarcely desirable, unless the designer is entirely sure that his designs are in thoroughly good taste.

The ceiling ought to be beautiful and also positively noticeable, but, if the decorator is



in doubt as to the trustworthiness of his own taste, a delicate and rather negative set of colors can be more safely used.

Arabesques are generally weak and unsatisfactory; and so are hanging festoons of flowers, and feeble ornament with fictions light and shade; but one of the worst forms of painting the tops of rooms seems to us the imitation panelling, with some parts projecting and others hollowed out. Ruskin dwells constantly on seeking truth in Art for truth's sake, and this is undoubtedly the right standard of excellence; but "honesty" also "is the best policy" for Art applied in the way of giving deceptive effects in rooms. The eye is instinctively caught by painted shadows, which must necessarily fall wrong during some portions of the twenty-four hours, when gas takes the place of the daylight; and from this result the confusion of mind and puzzled curiosity than which nothing is more foreign to the quiet and balance of a true æsthetic condition.

In all ages when the arts have flourished, every part of a room has been adorned with ornament. The Egyptians decorated their walls, and so did the Greeks and Romans, as we have seen; and besides them, the Byzantines, Moors, and the Europeans from the

time of the Middle Ages; and plain walls seem never to have been held in good repute by any cultivated people of the past. Judging from such antecedents it would seem strange that decoration in the United States, in this advanced age of the world, has till lately been so little valued. But it must be remembered that all the plastic and pictorial arts have for many years had a peculiar lifelessness everywhere, and artists have been floundering amid empirical experiments. Besides this reason, which has hindered even the most cultivated of Americans, and even Europeans, from daring to attempt much in the way of decoration, our architecture and ornament have felt the lack of stimulus which is afforded in nearly every city in Europe by the sight of the good Art of the past. But this lack of decoration is now giving place to more or less intelligent workmanship, and it remains for us to try and extract the true and permanent principles of ornament from the feverish fashions which envelop it. Hitherto our hotel dining-rooms, theatres, some churches, and a very few houses of the rich, have been the only buildings whose walls were ornamented; but a more general taste for the arts is at length bearing its fruits, and the people

in nearly all our cities are studying out some good mode of treatment for the adorning of their dwellings, which shall be agreeable and effective, but not very costly ; and we are beginning often to see pretty diaper patterns and light conventionalized figures of a pleasant color taking the place of plain stuccoed ceilings.

We will finish this subject of the papers and paintings of walls and ceilings by the consideration of the lower part of the sidewall, to which a dado or wainscoting properly belongs. Early in this article we described the ceilings of the Pompeian houses, and in these Greco-Roman dwellings, which are the best remaining specimens of the artistic dwellings of antiquity, we find that the dado was a very important object of consideration. The color of the frieze, the middle section of the wall, and the dado, were generally different in their ground-color ; but occasionally the three presented the same hue, varied in effect by the greater richness of the middle section of the wall. As we find in these walls that base, middle portion, and frieze are divided from each other by separating colors, they also show us that the tints increase in brightness from below upward ; the dado being often black,

the middle space red, and the frieze having a white ground-color.

But exceptions to this idea in decoration are frequent, and we find the base yellow, the central space red, and the frieze black. There is no stringent æsthetic law in the case, but it is well known that an increase of brilliancy of color makes any space seem lighter and more airy. Our modern uneducated ideas lead us to expect an equal brightness everywhere, though this was not the view taken by the antique decorator, more true in his artistic instinct and ideas than we Anglo-Saxons of to-day. He thought so little about brightness and gloom that he not infrequently made his whole ground-color black, enlivening it by brilliantly-tinted ornament; and he aimed at relieving well the people and the furniture and ornaments of the apartment, giving the whole a rich and harmonious effect, and to do this he avoided the neutral hues which so many delight in at present, such as pale blue, rose-color, or grayish-white. The men and women furnished these colors themselves in their dresses, and it was the strong backgrounds that relieved them.

The houses of the Middle Ages had dados for the most part of wood, either painted or

richly carved, above which Spanish-leather hangings, velvet with patterns of gold or silver, or tapestries, formed the central section of the wall.

With the development of general taste for house-decoration the arrangement of dados has also its share. By painting the three or four lower feet of the room of a different color from the general wall, a very decorative look is given to a room. A rich Indian-red or chocolate-colored dado, separated from the space above it by a line of black, produces apparent stability in the wall, and much improves the furniture and ornaments. A dado may be plain or brightened by some simple pattern of regular shape, in either of which cases it should be enriched by a border or piece of ornament of a separate design.

If the dado is ornamented, the rest of the wall can be plain, if the colors of both are soft; or the wall above the dado would have a fuller and handsomer effect by being powdered with another tint, or with gold.

One of the most beautiful dados is formed by a diaper pattern which rises four or five feet high to form the background for all pieces of furniture except the tallest articles. Sideboards, bookcases, high chairs, pianos,

and indeed nearly all the furniture of a parlor or library, look well so placed; above this simple dado on the middle wall, but so high that it is clearly in sight, the architect and decorator have then a delightful opportunity to fill the space to the ceiling or cornice either with painted panels, pictures of suitable size well placed, or with wall-hangings of cloth or fresco-paintings. In a large room no effect is better than this one, and the color of the dado may be of any rich and warm neutral shade of red, brown, green, or autumn-leaf hue. The pattern of the dado can be of any of the geometrical shapes we have mentioned as suitable for wall-papers, and it will be found that these patterns are satisfactory beyond any that flowers, vines, or curved figures produce. The various straight lines of geometrical figures afford a seeming support to the room and add to its impression of strength and solidity.

A dado of polished wood is very beautiful, either carved or with nicely-matched joinings, to form the base of a side-wall. If its height be sufficient, many ornaments may be fitly hung against it, such as steel armor in a hall, bunches of fans, or little hanging shelves with cut or colored glass in a parlor, or brass ornaments and odds and ends of

bric-à-brac, jars, old plaques, and, in short, any objects which possess either color or interesting forms. These may occupy vacant spaces between bookcases, or they can hang over low tables or be placed upon small stands. In conjunction with their backgrounds of polished oak or walnut, with the varied shades of the nicely-grained wood with its sunk or projecting joinings and cross-pieces, a bit of Kioto-ware, half in light and half in dark shadow, in some dim corner of a room, or a sky-blue Japanese screen glinting in the firelight against the dark wooden panel, makes a bit of a still-life picture as beautiful as anything which is painted on canvas, so far as color and *chiaro-oscuro* are concerned.

The dividing space between the side-wall paper and the dado should never be very wide, and it ought also to receive careful attention. Anything more than a band of color for a dividing line breaks up the simplicity and dignity of a wall, and a wide and elaborate strip here between the side-wall paper and the dado gives the impression of three or four different kinds of ornamentation competing for prominence. If the dado be in a plain color, three or four inches will be quite sufficient.

A very pleasant room could thus be made by having the ceiling in dark blue and cream-color, as we have described, and the cornice colored with a dominant tint of blue, with the side-wall cream-color down to the dado, the border of the dado some black geometrical pattern on dull-orange ground, and the dado of chocolate-color with small black figures finished at the floor by a varnished black line. Dados may be varnished or left in dead color, but the side-wall and ceiling are invariably better if of dead color. If a citrine side-wall be used, a dark-blue dado of a grayish shade or a rich maroon dado looks well; and if the deep-blue dado be made, the skirting line should be indigo varnished.

The suggestions we have made in regard to the proper manner of ornamenting rooms contain a few well-admitted principles so simple that any person of taste can easily trace them, and with a little experience carry them out to their various conclusions. It seems almost commonplace to urge the fact that a snitable dado gives a richness and elegance beyond what can be obtained with a side-wall paper going to the floor. A mellow-hued, inconspicuous wall-paper, any one can imagine, must afford a fine re-



lief to persons or objects in the room ; while a delicate ceiling well covered with small patterns encloses an apartment with a sense of completeness never produced by a plain and cold top-wall.

Let the decorator then proceed in his work, thinking of harmony of color and suitableness of design, and he may be sure that his work will be pleasing if he use very few colors and small patterns when he is not certain about a greater variety of tints, or more complicated combinations of form. He will discover that a small room looks best with the lesser form and lesser color of designs which a large hall or parlor would redeem by its size from a too positive and glaring conspicuousness.

## THE PROGRESS OF AMERICAN DECORATIVE ART.

BY MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

NOTHING would gratify me more than to declare that the decorative impetus in America was due to no outside influence, but was essentially national. But there is, unfortunately, no escaping the fact that it was to English influence, and more particularly as it was felt at the Centennial Exposition in 1876, that the movement owes its origin; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the public thereby gained a general idea of what is meant by decorative art, and of its importance as a factor in national wealth. Before this time there were artists in the United States who had given much time to the study of decoration, and especially to Japanese works. But this was felt, even by those best fitted to appreciate it, to be a pardonable eccentricity, in nowise affecting anything to be accomplished; and, in

fact, the result of these studies took no substantial form.

Before the Exposition of 1876, however, two wood-carvers, father and son, William and Henry Fry, Englishmen—the father having studied his art in England, and having been connected with some of the most important work done there up to the time of his emigration—had awakened some interest in their craft in Cincinnati. Through Mr. Benn Pitman, the photographer, also an Englishman, and a pupil of the Frys, wood-carving became popularized; students took it up as a profession, and it had a large *dilettanti* following. This work was confined to Cincinnati, and it only became known generally at the Centennial Exposition, and chiefly through surface decoration, the work of the women of leisure of the State Ohio.

Decorative Art in the United States could not, however, be long sustained on the influence of English Art thus received, since our country does not furnish the materials on which it depends. We have no great museums, no private collections, no noble houses, the depositories of accumulated treasures of Art; no fine interiors of famous houses, no architecture, all of which have

contributed so greatly to the revival of Decorative Art in England. Nor were these otherwise easily accessible. Our foraging-ground is across many thousand miles of water, and the materials gathered in hasty foreign tours are soon exhausted. One of two things became plain: Either American artists must be contented to reproduce foreign work, in spirit if not in detail, or they must make new paths for themselves.

There has been time enough to arrive at their decision, and to form some estimate of its value. One circumstance has tended to aid them materially in whatever they did: this is the vast accumulation of wealth in individual hands, which has enabled American decorators to carry out their ideas on something, if not the same scale, of magnificence that artists enjoyed in the past, when Church and guild stood patrons. In one sense it is the privilege of rich men to afford such opportunities; in another sense, and in view of the prominence of commercial interests over other interests in the United States, and the still hazy relations of Art to tangible values, it is entirely creditable to these men, who could have easily contented themselves with the prestige of having obtained foreign works, and having

the assurance that they would be accepted unquestioningly, that they should have risked works of such magnitude to American decorators, whose spurs as decorators were yet to be won.

Decorative artists being thrown, so to speak, on their own resources, there have resulted two things: The first and most important has been a certain *cachet* which distinguishes peculiarly American work, but which it is too soon to say marks an American school, although that is what it certainly will result in if the influences which now guide decorative work in this country continue. These distinctions amount to what may almost be considered as the outcome of a peculiar theory of decoration. This includes both certain structural uses of design seen in the adaptation of natural forms, and in the development of certain color schemes.

The second result includes new processes, original methods of arriving at certain effects, a wider range of materials used, and what might be termed the dynamic forces of decoration, since it has brought about new industries dependent on the prospects and progress of decoration. Under this head are included the manufactures of art stuffs, improvements in glass-making and meth-

ods of using glass, new combinations of metals for artistic purposes. Inventions of all kinds have followed upon one another, protected alike by the seal of the United States, some valueless, others important. These give rise to commercial interests, and the effect of the decorative movement here must be considered in this light as well as on its artistic side.

To refer again to the artistic distinctions which may be said to characterize decorative art here when left to itself: the first arises from the necessity of finding motives to hand. Decorative artists have been driven to nature nine times out of ten, when, if the conditions had been reversed, the proportions would have been as certainly reversed. Going to nature is always followed by an allegiance to nature that the most determined theorist on the subject of conventional decoration cannot shake off when he finds himself badly supported on the side of his theories. The consequence is, that in purely American work the boundaries between realism and conventionality are far less rigidly defined than elsewhere. This tendency towards greater realism in decoration is a tendency which it is easy to recognize might easily run into excess.

Happily it exists in the hands of men whose training in Art is not only of long date, but after severe methods. The men who lead in decorative work in New York, and with whose labors this article deals, are artists who made their reputations in the Fine Arts, men versed in the literature of Art, and whose artistic judgment is likely to hold them in check. Among these men may be mentioned John La Farge, a man whose artistic instincts are well balanced and well trained; who has explored with keen intelligence the various fields of Art, and has studied its expression among different nations and in different ages. Only less may be said of Samuel Colman, Louis Tiffany, Augustus St. Gaudens, and others. Men who have such equipment are not likely to lose their restraint when they follow a new bent. On the contrary, the delicate balance which the work shows, the nice artistic judgment which has carried suggestiveness so far forward, yet restrains the hand before it encroaches upon the boundaries of the picturesque, are its distinguishing peculiarities, and warrant the hopes that may be built upon it.

The most important outcome of the interest in Decorative Art here has been the

work in glass. Several years ago Mr. John La Farge, having been obliged to give up painting through ill-health, turned his attention to experiments in the making of glass. From this beginning, which was in a feeble way, several valuable patents have been secured, and the artistic use of glass has undergone important changes. Mr. La Farge's first patent was for opalescent glass. The peculiar jewel-like qualities of this glass render it as valuable by night as by day. When thus used it is in the form of jewels, or nuggets of glass whose angles throw off the light. This quality of the glass is now no longer confined to the opalescent glass, but is possible in all the hues of the prism, and this property alone has made glass available in a number of ways before unused.

Mr. La Farge has introduced still more improvements in the working of glass. One is the fusion of the pieces, rendering leads unnecessary; the other is the modelling of forms in glass, which in many cases produce effects not otherwise attainable except by paint or plating; both of these have arisen out of Mr. La Farge's peculiar feeling in decoration. A sensitive artist must control his materials. Art in its best sense does not



admit of compromises until all means are exhausted. Of all media glass is the most intractable, and particularly is it difficult in the sort of effects Mr. La Farge attempts. This may be best illustrated by the windows he has just completed for Mr. Frederick Ames of Boston. One of these represents some stocks of hollyhocks in bloom in front of a sloping bank, a bit of brown meadow and blue sky beyond. The stalks and flowers are as perfectly represented in the glass, in all their shifting bits of color, as might be done in a painting, and the effect is that of the work of the brush. It can readily be imagined how impossible this would be in ordinary glass without the use of paint; and in any case how the usual leading would interfere with the unity of the design when the effect is at all realistic and picturesque. This has been met by fusing the pieces; and this is so perfectly accomplished that no trace of the process is seen. The other windows are Japanese panels, different compositions introducing peacocks and red and white peonies. These peonies in modelling and shading vie with the most exquisite flower-painting, and in this case the effect is reached by running the molten glass in forms that leave the

flower in intaglio, and the transmission of the light gives the changes of tint which imitate the subtle blending of nature. These windows may be taken as the best exponents of Mr. La Farge's color. That of the Japanese windows is full and rich even to gorgeousness. The prevailing tone is blue, a deep, glowing blue, which is the background for the peacocks with their gleaming dyes, the heavy-petaled peonies, the brown rocks and silvery moonlight stream flowing beneath. These are but suggestions, the treatment, as has been intimated, being Japanese. The composition is sufficiently intelligible, but is not insisted on. The peacocks are fully identified, but they exist in the light that never was on sea or land. But the charm of the windows above all else lies in the poetry and mystery of the color—color which, as does all that is best in Art, stimulates and feeds the imagination. That of the third window is frank and joyous. The hollyhocks are as blithe as a summer's day; the landscape is by no means brought out with the same truth of detail as are the flowers, but it is so powerful as a suggestion that it is necessary to pause and consider before being aware that this is the case.

The deduction from these windows is that Mr. La Farge as a colorist is poetic and ideal, but that, mysterious or frank, his coloring is always healthy. He is less afraid of color than any of our decorators. He uses it boldly, but if powerful it is never crude, if delicate it is never affected, if mysterious it is not morbid.

Mr. Tiffany, on the contrary, confines his glass to conventional decoration. His large window in the Union League Club-house, so unfortunately placed, is much less interesting in color than in design. This is ingeniously made not to appear at once, but in time is revealed. A vein of ingenuity runs through the greater part of his decoration, and excites attention distinct from that of its decorative intent. This is particularly true of his use of materials, as he disdains nothing that can contribute to the effect. To return to the glass, there is a smaller window in the Union League Club-house which contains some beautiful color, but not as part of a general color-scheme. His last most important work has been a large screen across the corridor of the White House at Washington. In this the national emblems, which we admit neither in color nor form are well adapted for decorative purposes,

have been made to take a prominent part, and their inherent difficulties to skilfully harmonize with his scheme. The color of Mr. Tiffany's glass is restrained in tone, and seems to be used rather in accordance with some decorative theories he holds than prompted by a spontaneous artistic impulse.

Almost the most important work of the year has been that done in wood. I refer to the dining-room ceiling of Mr. Cornelius Vaunderbilt's house done by Mr. La Farge and Mr. Augustus St. Gaudens, the sculptor. In magnificence, if not in extent, this parallels fifteenth-century work of its kind. The room, which measures forty-five by twenty-three feet, is intended as well for a picture-gallery. The only horizontal light is through a conservatory at one end. The chief light comes through glass panes in the ceiling in a simple design, and composed chiefly of opalescent glass set with colored gems and jewels. The ceiling is divided into twenty panels, of which the glass fills six. The remaining panels are of mahogany set in oak, and between oak beams ornamented with a double Greek fret pattern in mother-of-pearl. So variously are these panels treated that, with the exception of four, each requires separate description. These four panels are

in the corners of the room. The chief ornament is a head of Apollo as the sun-god, modelled in low relief and cast in a bronze composition giving dull golden tones. Surrounding the head is a wreath of laurel in relief, whose leaves are of green serpentine. On either side are doves with out-spread wings, holding ribbons, and these are all inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Defining the limits of the panel is a wreath of golden bronze with iridescent tones, and this is framed in an egg-and-tongue moulding of old oak.

Following the dimensions of the room on one side are two panels, with allegorical designs of the Sun and Moon, divided into three sections, in mediæval style, with small figures, reproduced in metals and pearls. These are copied from an old ivory carving, now covering the *Office de Lion* at Sens, France, and have been enlarged from plaster casts by Mr. St. Gaudens. These flank a central panel in front of the chimney-piece, in which the date of erection, in high projecting ivory Roman numerals, is placed above an ornament inlaid in pearl, while at each end is a wreath in green serpentine with berries of coral and ivory. On the other side the corresponding panel has clasped hands with olive-

branches surrounded by vine-leaves, carved heads, and great flowers in relief, and their cups inlaid with pearl. Flanking this are two panels, one bearing in ivory letters the word *Hospitalitas*, the other *Amicitia*, each enclosed between wreaths with ivory and coral berries. The four principal panels, placed in pairs at the ends, are the figures of Bacchus, Ceres, Pomona, and Actæon. These figures were modelled by Mr. St. Gaudens. In reproducing these in the panels, something of the exquisite feeling and vitality of the flesh which marks Mr. St. Gaudens's work is lost. But the poetic conception of at least three of the figures, and the graceful composition, make them, as isolated pieces of sculpture, among the most delightful works produced even by Mr. St. Gaudens, who has done so much that is enjoyable. The least interesting of the panels is the Ceres, who is fully draped, holding a basket of fruit.

The Bacchus is a charming type. The figure is carved in low relief in the mahogany, and overlaid with creamy Vienna marble, which renders the flesh. In this something is lost of the delicate modelling through the process, which is difficult. The mantle is left in the mahogany, which tones

in beautifully with the marble. The leafy crown and foliage is a dull greenish bronze composition, and the cup inlaid with mother-of-pearl. All these various materials, boldly put in juxtaposition, form part of a general color-scheme, and their tints are chosen with greatest care: this has involved a number of methods and of experiments new to decoration here. Metal enters largely into all these panels, and each composition is the result of a special alloy, which will produce the necessary harmonizing tint. The numerous tones thus secured, and the memoranda in this way obtained, at the cost of much time, labor, and expense, will doubtless have its own value in the future. At present it chiefly indicates under what difficulty an artist labors, given a certain quantity of work to be done in a certain time, since the American householder has yet to learn that Art is not produced by mechanical methods, and with the swiftness and untiringness of a machine.

The obvious difficulty in work of this kind, uniting so many tints and such different textures, is the prevision necessary to make them not details but a whole. Even those who most greatly admired the work when seen in parts felt uncertain of the

effect when these were brought together. It was even felt that some treatment of the woods might be necessary to harmonize the panels. But the ceiling is now finished, and it is gratifying to add that all that will be necessary to perfect its unity may be safely left to the gentle ministration of time.

Remarkable as has been the development in other branches of Decorative Art, the same advance is not so visible in that which comes under the designation of the decoration of interiors. We are a receptive people; any new idea or fashion quickly gains lodgment. That of decoration has spread as rapidly as one of our own forest fires. The demand for decorators has, therefore, quickly outstripped the supply of men competent to decorate.

We are as impatient a people as we are receptive; and the result is we shall need some time to realize and to endure much that has been hastily done. The first attempts naturally have been to reproduce well-known foreign styles. To a certain point this taste is easily gratified. Every architect's library, however scantily equipped, supplies him with sufficient definitions of forms to construct an epoch if necessary, and one that cannot be disproven. Greek,



Roman, and Gothic, Louis Quinze, Louis Quatorze, Henri Deux, and Queen Anne are household names.

In looking over a book of these modern interiors, breathlessly produced, as it were, two things leave their strongest impression—their luxury, and their want of repose. Money, at least, has not failed. The best things have been done under the influence of our own Colonial styles, the best in the sense of greatest simplicity, and in that spirit of intelligence which surroundings may be made to express. Nothing can be truer than that the mere repetition of forms assigned to this or that period is meaningless and unsatisfying. It is a curious fact that of all our interiors, reproducing the decoration of different periods or peoples, the most successful have been the Moorish and Japanese. This is not probably because they are more vital or truthful, but because they are so foreign to us that the mind makes no attempt to adjust them to our surroundings. We live in them as in strange lands, delighted with their beauty and novelty, and unconscious of self.

Such are the Japanese rooms of Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt, of New York, and of Dr. E. T. Williams, of Philadelphia. The walls of

Mr. Vanderbilt's room are framed in bamboo, and made the home of curious bronzes, handsomely carved teak-wood, and celestial porcelain. Dr. Williams has a Japanese poem on Spring and Fusiyama's calm beauty, above Japanese flower-panels that make a panorama of loveliness on his walls. Interesting and pleasing as these are, they correspond to nothing in our domestic life, nor do we demand that they should.

The return of Mr. Lockwood de Forest from India with exquisite wood carvings copied from the perforated stone tracery of the temples of Northern India built under the Mohammedan conquest, swinging seats, and curiously-wrought chairs and lanterns, gave great impetus to Moorish interiors, since much was ready to hand, and Japanese work was no longer in its first novelty.

All rooms of this kind make the strongest impression at first, and the strength and weakness of its gradations are a matter of individual temperament. This is not so with the work done under the influence of these styles, or rather when they have furnished the suggestion, and the decoration has worked itself out, trusting to a certain feeling rather than to the unequivocal utterance of forms. In the house of Mr. George

H. Kemp, one of the most interesting houses in New York City, a painting by Pasini is the salient point in the walls from which the decoration proceeds, Arabian and Persian in character, but one which excites no anxiety as to consistency, and in which varied objects claim attention, while the general impression is not so much dependent on sight as on feeling—a much easier way of getting in sympathy with one's surroundings.

In Mr. Louis Tiffany's library, the details freely suggest the influence of Japanese and Moorish art, without insisting on adherence to the conventional signs of either. The walls are panelled in tea-chest wrapping. This is painted in yellows and browns, the design being leaves and flowers drawn with the freedom and naturalness which mark Japanese work. Occasionally, in place of a panel of the tea-chest wrapping, a picture painted as a panel and in harmony with the surroundings has been inserted. The wide doorway between the library and dining-room has a band of carved wood above it. The carving is perforated and the design left, the leaves and flowers of which appear to carry out the design on the matting that takes the place of a frieze. The effect is

novel and delightful, and the details in themselves interesting.

A corner of the dining-room on the other side of the door discloses the same freedom of treatment. The walls are panelled to the height of the mantel, and mouldings mark a division which holds rare china and cups. Above this is suspended from small hooks an embroidered blue band, and a band of the same description makes the frieze. The walls are covered with a Japanese paper the ground of which is yellow, and the ceiling continues the wall tints in a yellow paper sprinkled with blue and glistening with mica. The prominent feature of this room is the decoration over the mantel. The turkey-cock among the pumpkins and corn is thoroughly American; and the decorative features, the striking forms and rich color of material so exclusively our own, Mr. Tiffany was the first to appreciate. What should be especially mentioned in connection with these rooms is that the materials in every case are inexpensive, and the panels are of the matting of tea-chests, the embroidered band and frieze of the dining-room of a blue material called "denim" in this country, and used chiefly in the manufacture of workmen's "overalls." The value

of the decoration lies in its harmony of color, its composition, so to speak, and in the spontaneity of its ornamental forms. This is noteworthy, since it is not characteristic of the artistic homes which are springing up on every side.

The frieze in the dining-room of Mr. George Kemp makes lavish use of American products. The foundation is gilded burlap. Boughs of ripe apples, peaches, and pears, tangled vines with clusters of purple grapes, make a gorgeous scheme of color on the walls, and yellow pumpkins and corn are given a place on the panel above the buffet.

The library of Mr. Clarence H. Clark, of Philadelphia, has a notable frieze in a series of panels of stained glass in Japanese designs that also serve to light the room. Mr. Benn Pitman, of Cincinnati, has lighted his dining-room in the same way, there being no side windows. This dining-room is a model of ingenuity, and contains some significant artistic features. It is an interior room, and too small to allow for the ordinary furniture of a dining-room. Accordingly the buffets are supplied by two sets of hanging shelves, one for silver and one for china. These are enriched by the most exquisite carving, and when filled with their wares

perform the same service as might a picture or other ornament to the walls.

As yet but little has been done as regards mural decoration in a large way. We at one time had a season of Italian frescos, but these we are glad to forget. Recently Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt has introduced in his new home a ceiling by Galland, and Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt a ceiling by Baudry. Of equal importance with these is the ceiling by Mr. John La Farge for Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt. The room itself is worth some description. It, in fact, is a corridor leading from the dining-room to the Moorish smoking-room to which allusion has been made. The architecture is Italian, taken from Vignola, and consists of a central vault and two arcades.

In the large central vault is a long panel of stained glass, which is quite light, since its object is the display of the drawings. Where the two arches of the end meet the walls are two large semicircles filled with paintings. In one is represented Venus in a boat drawn through the sedgy water by Loves, steering and pulling with mimic strength. On the other is an allegorical representation of Dawn, drawn in her chariot by two prancing horses, with Loves

ruining at her side. The architectural divisions of the central vault are four T-pau-els, and four F-panels where they meet the end walls. These panels contain paintings illustrating the Seasons and four of the Senses. This series of lovely types is as unhackneyed as it is charming, and the most beautiful of all is "Smell." In action the figure is not unlike the "Pomona" of the dining-room ceiling, which has been described before. The girl has the same attitude, but instead of the knife and the fruity boughs, she draws towards herself a blossoming vine, which, sweeping across the body, makes its only drapery. The names given to these figures, it will be seen, afford simply the most conventional handles. The most of the work was done under Mr. La Farge, but this nude figure is the work of the master himself, and in subtle modelling, in the rendering of flesh with sensuousness, yet with delicacy and mystery, and in color, he has done nothing finer.

Work of this sort belongs to the highest class of decorative art. In a country comparatively new as ours it requires not only men of wealth, but those who have the public spirit, to use one of our current phrases, to develop the resources of the

country. Artists of their own motion cannot attempt works of such magnitude, and thus far there has not been an irresistible pressure urging them to forsake their accustomed modest canvases.

Still something has been done. Mr. Edwin H. Blashfield is now painting a centre and two large side panels for the new house of Mr. Twombly. The design is pleasing in composition and agreeable in color. The "Dawn," which is the subject of the centre, is a female figure borne through the sky by a clustering group of figures. In one of the side panels is a floating figure emptying from her draperies flowers as the emblem of good gifts. That of the other is a spirited female figure with helmet and shield, chasing away brownies, as we may call the sombre-hued imps which symbolize bad dreams. Neither the conception nor the composition belong in any way to this country, except as the work is done here and by an American artist. Mr. Blashfield's work is always worthy of attention, but he has done other things which are much more individual, and consequently more interesting.

Mr. Blashfield's management of color is peculiar to himself, and expresses sentiment



as color in the hands of but few artists is made to do. At least, if the range of expression is not greater, he plays upon many more keys. One of his most successful works is a decorative panel, "Autumn." A dark-haired woman, past her youth, sits in the niche of a stone slab, watching the birds flit by. There is none of the melancholy of meditation in her attitude; but that is the sentiment of the work, as well as of richness and maturity which her draperies convey in dull yellows and reds, carrying out the tints of the leaves at her feet. I know of nothing better managed than these draperies, in which the edges, in a manner that eludes analysis, convey the feeling of the leaf that has felt the touch of early frost. In this work there is distinctly a new feeling, and one which carries with it the element of promise.

Mr. Francis H. Lathrop has done a good deal of decorative work, which is always to be recognized by certain low-toned yellows and reddish-browns. Mr. Lathrop is the author of the decoration over the proscenium arch of the new Metropolitan Opera-house, "Apollo crowned by the Muses."

Apart from the inevitable tendency of decorative work in this country towards

originality arising out of enforced conditions, there have been several definite attempts towards that end from theoretical conviction that this was in itself desirable. At the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, in the exhibit of the Woman's Pavilion, there was a display of carved wood from Cirencester which attracted much attention, not only because it was the work of women, and of women of wealth and leisure, but from its intrinsic excellence both in workmanship and design. As mentioned in an earlier paragraph, the interest in wood-carving in Cincinnati is first due to William and Henry Fry, father and son, Englishmen, both of whom, before emigration, worked on the House of Commons. Through Mr. Benn Pitman, the stenographer, also an Englishman, who studied with the Frys, wood-carving became very popular. At this time the large Music Hall of Cincinnati was building, and it was a matter of pride among the women of that city to assist in the carving of the great organ, which is, in fact, one of the finest results of wood-carving in this country.

Mr. Pitman, a man of keen artistic temperament, and one capable of kindling his enthusiasms in others, was placed at the

head of the Cincinnati School of Design, and wood-carving became speedily its great feature. At the outset a sort of creed was adopted, one of the principal articles of which was "a reverent and faithful interpretation of nature's forms, and their adaptation to the needs and necessities of to-day." There is a religious as well as poetic element in Mr. Pitman's Art theories. The ethics of his work and teaching rest on beauty and sincerity. The grotesque forms of the Renaissance he does not admit, and for reasons which to many people might seem transcendental, he restricts his pupils to floral ornament. Any one at all familiar with the flora of the Ohio Valley will recognize how literally Mr. Pitman has drawn upon it in his search for new forms, and how fruitful it has been.

The tendency towards realism in American work has been alluded to before, and it is especially remarkable in wood-carving. In a cherry-wood base-board the ornament is taken from the flower and leaf of a weed familiarly known here as the Jimson. It has a prickly leaf and a long tube-shaped flower of a bluish-white color. It has so execrable an odor that no one attached to it possibilities of any description until Mr. Pit-

man, whose eye is alert to discover hidden beauties, made use of it. The decoration is effective, because as an ornament, the position of which forbids relief, it has still the merit of being clearly distinguished.

The white oleander and the swamp-rose have also both been utilized in rosettes. On a certain sitting-room door the swamp-rose and Maximilian daisy which ornament the casings also furnish motives for the rosettes in the diagonals of the lower panels. The treatment of this door corresponds to the base, shaft, and capitals of a pillar. The lower panels are incised work where injury might result from contact with other things. The upper panels are ornamented at least two inches in relief with the buckeye. No description can suggest the value of the buckeye as an ornament. Its luxuriance in that part of the country gives to Ohio the name of the Buckeye State. It is not only good in form, but its texture, and its highly-polished nut, half enclosed in its rough shell, offer rare opportunities to the wood-carver, and there is no reason why it should not form as fruitful a source of ornament as the oak or laurel.

There is a bedstead, the decoration of which is conceived in a spirit of poetic sym-

bolism that I will not attempt to set down. Geranium leaves form the lower borders. The upper panels are crowded with daisies, and these are again found in the double rosettes. On the side panels are the white azalea and the balloon-vine. Underneath the flight of swallows and the effect of sky is a luxurious branch of snowballs, carved with great feeling and delicacy, while below are the spiky rays of the palmeris. I give the common and accepted names of the flowers in this country, which, if called by different names in England, will be as readily recognized by their forms. The sides of a certain dining-room door exhibit the flowering stock of day lilies and the graceful hemp. The capitals give a single leaf of the wild-parsnip. A better example, however, of the capabilities of the wild-parsnip is seen on the frames of the panels. The wild-parsnip has been one of the most successful of Mr. Pitman's new forms, and with this may be mentioned the sneeory plant and the burdock, both of which have been successfully utilized. On a mahogany bookcase, the mechanical construction of which for the many services of a library would be interesting, the different varieties of fern are rendered.

There is something more than carving and

designing in all this work. To achieve the end desired, it must be rendered with feeling and sentiment. There is a distinctive value set on individual work, so far as it is the outcome of personal feeling guided by intelligence and sound artistic training.

Something should be said of the work in pottery in Cincinnati, which corresponds to that in wood, inasmuch as it was an independent effort, and prosecuted at first by women of leisure. Miss Lonise MacLoughlin's experiments in barbotine attracted attention in the Paris Exposition of 1876, but the outcome has been much more important than this tentative work in Limoges ware. For it led to experiments in Ohio clays with admirable results. The Rookwood Pottery, established by Mrs. George Ward Nichols (the daughter of Mr. Joseph Longworth, recently dead, a man whose encouragement of the Arts has been of the most substantial kind), has done good service in the production of a cream-bodied ware known as the Rookwood ware. In this an attempt has been successfully made to give to ordinary household utensils better forms.

At the recent loan exhibition for the Bartholdi Pedestal Fund, there was the best exhibition of Ohio pottery yet shown. This

is true in respect not only to the quality of the ware, but to color and ornament. Most of the work shown by us has been either an attempt to imitate some special ware, or to assert originality in some bizarre, undigested fashion. This ware not only was special in texture and body, but independent and original in decoration. It is a translucent cream-bodied ware, in which the ground had the effect of hammered silver, except, of course, in color. The decoration in every case was extremely delicate, gold being lavishly used. One of the most striking pieces was a large jar, crossed by ornamental diagonals of gold, with a decoration in which trees and deer were introduced, but the general effect of which can be best compared to sunlight seen through mist or fine snow. Another smaller bowl-shaped vase had a single spray of wild rose, drawn evidently from nature, for selection only is necessary in going to the fountain-head for suitable forms. The relation between the foliage and the tint of the flower and the thin cream body of the ware showed the happiest feeling for delicate color.

Very significant of the growth of true Art feeling has been the interest taken by manufacturers and the stimulus given by them,

Warren, Fuller & Co., prominent wall-paper manufacturers, instituted a competition two years ago which has indirectly brought out some noteworthy results. Out of at least fifty designs submitted by both American and foreign professional designers of wall-paper, the three prizes were taken by women whose artistic studies had been in an entirely different direction. Although technically the work was crude, it was distinguished by two things: originality in design, and new color schemes. In the design which took the first prize of £1000, that of Miss Constance Wheeler, one is reminded of Japanese work, but not in its composition nor its coloring, nor in the theory of decoration it implies. The resemblance lies in the freedom and boldness of its drawing, the perfect familiarity it shows with natural forms. The design is a silver honeycomb over a faint yellow-pink ground, dashed here and there with gold. The surface is broken by clover wreaths, which form disks, the centre being filled in with slightly varying tints, and by bees. These two motives are repeated in the dado and frieze, the disks in the dado suggesting straw hives. No attempt has been made to keep the decoration flat. The bees are drawn in perspective, and the clover



shows all the waywardness of the natural growth; and yet the decoration is so well balanced that the feeling of the freshness and nearness has a charm that no one would associate with picturesqueness, and certainly proves not incompatible with decoration. In reproducing this paper, which has been done in various tints, it has undergone some changes, which naturally result when artistic treatment must succumb to commercial necessities. This has also been the case in the second prize design by Miss Ida F. Clark. The field consisted of waving silver water lines over a pale greenish ground. Underneath were the dim forms of fish with gleaming scales of silver and gold. Sea-weed formed the dado, and shells were ingeniously disposed in the frieze. In describing the designs of both these papers, they seem to insist too much to serve the proper uses of a wall-paper. But this was happily obviated in the color schemes which carefully avoided contrasts, making use only of small intervals of color.

Mr. Louis Tiffany has given some attention to wall-papers. A very exquisite design is that taken from the filmy wild elematis and the cobweb. The cobweb is in silver over a creamy yellow ground, and the

clematis in gold. Insects in metallic tints, and here and there dashes of metallic colors, give further variety of tint. Another striking paper by Mr. Tiffany has the ground covered with a vine-like pattern, and apparently caught in it are sprays of fruit blossoms and puny willows drawn directly from nature. Such work as this ventures on dangerous ground, and can only be controlled by wise artistic restraint. When successful, as this paper is, it has great freshness and is charmingly naïve. In a way, it suggests Japanese effects, and yet it cannot recall anything similar in Japanese work.

Mr. Samuel Colman has designed several papers, in which the maple and the honeysuckle serve as motives for all-over patterns.

On the part of manufacturers nothing has been spared for the encouragement of wall-paper designing, each of the above designs having been reproduced with all the skill and mechanical perfection at their command.

Out of this there has arisen some discussion concerning the value of artistic training preparatory to the technical requirements of wall-paper and carpet designing. This is directly opposed to the methods followed in the designing-rooms, by which the color-boy is advanced, if he chooses to follow his trade,

until he arrives at the position of designer. His artistic intelligence follows the lead of his handiwork, and his progress, unless he is exceptional, is along the beaten track. I can only speak of American designing-rooms. Here, at least, this is the usual system, and manufacturers unable to procure creditable designs at home, continue to draw upon foreign resources for the greater part of their work.

In accordance with the first theory—a special Art education towards the specific ends of wall-paper and carpet designing—several schools have been established, and are filled with Art students, chiefly women. The course, extending over two years, begins with the elements of drawing, and proceeds through the copying of natural forms, their analysis, the conventionalizing of leaves and flowers in detail, problems in design, combining geometrical and natural forms, and exercises of such nature. These are accompanied by the study of the literature of decorative art, the study of styles, the copying of historic ornament, and the curriculum concludes with the adaptation of designs to the limitation of the block and loom.

The most practical of these schools is presided over by Mrs. Florence E. Cory, who, in

her efforts to master the details of carpet designing, enlisted the co-operation of several manufacturers, and against the unwritten laws of the designing-room, which rigorously exclude women, she was permitted to enter them, and was thus enabled to study design with reference to the limitations of the machinery. For some time she has furnished designs to manufacturers, and in her school a Jacquard loom is one of the principal objects, and the practical submission of designs to its requirements is the final work of her students.

Generous interest has been taken in the project by manufacturers, who, at stated times, have invited the school to visit their factories, and have encouraged it by the purchase of designs. It is too soon to determine the result of the experiment, at least so far as it can be depended on for original ideas and justifying its intention to keep out of beaten paths.

Mr. Charles G. Leland, who is not unknown in England, has created a great deal of interest in industrial Art in Philadelphia, and in a series of manuals containing technical instruction as well as explaining his own theories of design, has done good service throughout the country.

The place of color in American work is as distinct as that of design. Again we are thrown on ourselves, since the causes that have produced that range of colors which we identify with the revival of decoration in England, under the somewhat paradoxical term antique tints, do not exist here. The influence of English color has been great in this country in decorative work, and it has been especially imitated by manufacturers. It is not, however, to be observed in distinctively American decorative work. In the first place we can only have it by copying it from English decorative art, since we have not the sources from which to feel its beauty and get its inspiration; and color filtered at second hand, it must be conceded, is apt to lose its charm. A striking example of this was seen in the two companies giving "Patience" here at the same time in New York. The Gilbert and Sullivan Company was costumed in tints sent out from London, selected for the purpose by William Morris. These the American company attempted to copy; but in doing it, the precision of tint being missed all through, the stage effect lost half its beauty. American color has its own sign-manual because it cannot escape from

it. The American artist is the temperamental product of a new and comparatively isolated country. From the result of those conditions which create in the American in general certain distinctive features that other peoples recognize, the artist escapes no more than another man. There are nervous qualities in our atmosphere of which no one is more quickly conscious than the foreigner who comes here. It is said that there are more bright days in New York City in a year than in any other city within the temperate zone. It is no more improbable that these two influences, for example, make themselves felt in the colors of an artist's palette, than that they are manifested in any other way. That they are accountable for the crudity which is painfully felt in much native color is equally probable; and that there is much of this that is raw and jarring may be readily admitted. But against those artists whose work is powerful enough to constitute the formative influences at present chiefly felt, the charge of crudity cannot be brought.

This color rests, as does form, on the direct suggestions of Nature. I have been interested in studying the development of color-schemes in a number of different works.

It is not probable that these are the result of analysis of definite purpose on the part of the artists. Those who create do not analyze; feeling leads them in certain directions, and the generalization from these is the work of others. If it could be put in concise terms, American color might be said to be the expression of the value of the small interval. To better illustrate this a portière by Mrs. Candace Wheeler may be taken as an instance. The design is a mass of roses with foliage embroidered on a light yellow ground. The deep red of the roses, the olives and browns of the foliage rising out of the vase form the starting point. The color then lightens, yellow mingles with the red, the roses have taken in more of the sunlight, the foliage casts aside its olives and browns for redder and yellower tones. In this way, by imperceptible gradations, the mass rises through yellow-pinks into yellows and yellow-greens, and finally sinks in pale yellow buds and tender leaves into the tint of the background. Now through all these undulations each detail shows some one of the varied phases of nature, some new combination of tints which has its actual existence. Yet the most striking feature of the whole is the changing splendor of the

color. A word should be said in connection with the composition which repeats in the same way the inexhaustible variety of the natural growth of the sense of depth in the mass and the feeling of the forms behind.

Probably the most superb piece of color and most magnificent embroidery yet produced is a curtain made by Mr. La Farge and Miss Tillinghast for Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt. This repeats the story of Æneas's adventures at Carthage, after Raphael's cartoons, as arranged by Mare Antonio in the Vatican. These are in solid embroidery, in silk and gold, on linen framed in gold, with the legends in raised gold letters, and set about an oblong centre-panel of cloth and gold. There is no occasion here to speak of the exquisite needle-work, the reproduction of the drawing, and the dramatic action of the groups.

The color is subdued, but full and glowing; its most remarkable feature, however, results from the way in which the dazzling sheen of the cloth-of-gold is brought into relation with embroidery. This is done by toning down the gold with short broken lines of color, repeating the tints of embroidery, and mingling them through the use of small intervals rising and descending. Words cau-



not convey an idea of the resplendence of this mass of tints, through which the gold of the ground gleams, and in which the color does not appear to exist, but rather to palpitate and float above it.

I must refer in this connection to the use of perspective, which is unhesitatingly made use of by prominent decorators, as seen in a curtain after a design by Mr. John La Farge, and executed under Miss Tillinghast for Mrs. John Zerega of New York. This attempts, in *appliqué* and embroidery of the richest stuffs, to define the features of a landscape. The aerial perspective, the sense of distance, the feeling of motion, the accuracy of the forms in the foreground and their relation to the landscape are all carefully considered. And seen as it is, hung in one of the most charming drawing-rooms in New York, its decorative aspect is most impressive.

One of the first difficulties that the Associated Artists met in their work was the inability to procure proper stuffs. Before beginning their work, Mr. Tiffany made a collection of artistic fabrics in Europe and the East, but these were soon exhausted, and space and time both intervened before they could be replaced, since in Art-work the

right thing must be had. Finding American silk manufacturers willing to experiment, the Associated Artists undertook the production of their own stuffs with gratifying results. No richer fabrics are now produced in any country, and none of more exquisite texture. The most notable outcome of these experiments—experiments no longer, since the association not only supplies its own needs, but has created a market for its stuffs — is the production of different tones through new ways of using the shuttle. One of the most magnificent of these new stuffs has been christened Gazonga, or Five Aces, since nothing could be better; and if this be regarded as peculiarly American nomenclature, to the initiated it is certainly very expressive. In this stuff one color is undershot in a single thread, the upper being in filaments, now whole, now subdivided, making an irregular twill. The effect of this is not the mere shifting of tints such as one sees in changeable silk, but also the union of tints in different proportions as they are blended by the play of light. The silk momie cloths, which give somewhat the same effects, are especially delightful in texture, being soft as an Eastern web.

Another interesting fabric, entirely new,

is the tapestry stuff, adapted for the tapestry stitch. The peculiarity of the tapestry stitch is that it passes through the meshes of the warp, and the decoration thus becomes part of the web. The stitch in this way allows for the blending of colors in the same way that they can be obtained by the brush.

Some important hangings have thus been made for Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt by Mrs. Candace Wheeler, after designs by Miss Dora Wheeler. There are eleven panels executed in tapestry stuff showing salmon-pink tones which serve for the flesh tints. The first of these is the Full Moon, personated by a beautiful woman, her head in a disk which her wings assist to describe, the atmospheric effect about her making another disk, and her feet touching a lily pod just opening in the pond beneath, while behind her are the suggestions of a distant landscape. The companion to this is the Crescent Moon, a lovely figure with the face in profile and streaming hair, whose folded wings make the crescent in which she sits among the clouds, the atmospheric effect again suggesting two overlapping disks. The Air Spirit and Water Spirit are the motives for two companion panels. That of the Air Spirit

is probably the loveliest of all the beautiful, sensitive types which Miss Wheeler has given. With upturned face, again in profile, she is represented seated on clouds and sending forth a flight of larks. The Water Spirit sits under the crest of a wave holding a shell to catch the falling pearls, while a fish leaps up to catch a pearl the shell has lost. To continue, seriatim, the designs on the panels: Psyche and the Spirit of the Flowers make the next pendants. These are two floating figures in which the beauty of line, the soft, undulating, and varied curves of the two figures are even more attractive than their treatment. In the Psyche the figure seems to spring from the growing stalks of the milkweed, whose bursting filaments, becoming more and more attenuated, make the light drapery of the figure. In the Flower Spirit the form in the same way seems to proceed from a leafy vine. The delicacy with which such effects are managed in the drawing, as in the color when put in the tapestry, shows the nicest artistic feeling, and the buoyancy and lightness of the figures in these panels, as in all of the aerial figures, are worthy of all praise. This is especially to be remarked in a larger group—the Graces, three girls dancing with

entwined arms, their resplendent robes of gold and blue and pink hemmed with jewels, concealing from view, but not restraining the feeling of the lithe forms beneath. Cherubs swinging and cherubs pelting one another with roses add two more panels; and two larger groups represent cherubs playing a large viol among roses, a little floating figure wielding the bow, and others singing and playing a large golden harp. In the rendering of these figures the tint of the stuffs, as has been said, prevails in the flesh tints, the high lights and shadows being given by the needle. Particular mention should be made of the rendering of the textures, as seen, for example, in the wood of the viol so carefully imitated.

The manufactures of the association not only include fabrics, but printed stuffs. Special designs for these are furnished, the association agreeing that they shall not be repeated. Some delightful specimens of this sort have been produced, showing that delicate balance between the conventional and real which, as has been said, resembles more nearly Japanese work than any European influence, and yet could not be mistaken for Japanese work.

Work in marble has been recently con-

spicuous in interior decoration, and I am glad to refer to one of the caryatides "Peace" and "Love," modelled by Mr. St. Gaudens for the large chimney-piece in the main hall of Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt's house.

To originality in furniture, with all the limitations about the word, we can make no claim. Among the best men eclecticism has been wise and fruitful, and that which may arise out of this will be fruitful rather than the result of a deliberate intention to create. One is reminded of this in the work of a young architect, Mr. William B. Bigdon, which bears a personal impress, that of delicacy and refinement. The forms are pure, and the pleasure is in these and not in the ornament, which is always chaste and unpretentious. I have seen some drawing-room cabinets by him in which a brass moulding defines a parallelogram with perfect frankness. The brilliancy of the pieces lies in the combination of mahogany, glass (in small subdivisions), and brass inlay, all of which render them at once light, sparkling, and brilliant. This metal inlay is always difficult in this country, owing to the extremes of our climate—extremes which render the importation of foreign work of this kind impracticable.

The Associated Artists give a distinctive mark to the furniture which they design, inasmuch as its decorative feature is color. In a number of pieces, for example, intended for a library, the lines suggest strength and service rather than grace. These are plainly covered with brown silk plush, the play of light and shade giving it a charm which the intricacies of upholstery cannot rival. The ornament, if one chooses to discriminate in that way, is in the studding of the frame with large and small copper nails. To these is given but little apparent symmetry in arrangement, and conveying the idea of necessity in fixing down the stuff rather than of carrying out any design. The color of the copper in relation to the tint of the plush is much more important, and it is this which gives the furniture its decorative value.

The color value of copper Mr. Tiffany fully appreciates, and makes frequent use of it. Another effective combination is copper worked with leather. I have seen a screen by him of which the centre gives the legend of St. George in minute glass mosaics; and the leading of the border spells out the text in Old English lettering. The screen is mounted in leather of the natural

tint, and is not only ornamented with copper nails, but has handles and legs of hammered copper. In chandelier and such pieces color is the important thing, and here the opalescent and chameleon-lined glass, of which we make much use in this country, is introduced with effect.

Lockwood de Forest has done much towards the beauty of furniture in supplying the makers of furniture with Indian ornament through his contracts with the native workmen of Upper India. These serve as panels, and, reproduced in metal, are used in registers and window-screens.



## THE LIMITS OF DECORATION.

BY LUCIA GILBERT RUNKLE.

“A GOOD book,” said Milton, “is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.” But book-lovers have a right to complain when the mere shell and casket of their riches is made so splendid or so frail that intimacy with the soul thereof is forbidden them. Not to speak in parables, your true reader turns sullen when a new book comes to him in a binding too fine for its uses. He loves beautiful covers, no doubt, if he be a genuine bibliophile, and buys the best he can afford, always setting the soul of a volume above its body. But beautiful covers need not be useless, as they are so often made.

Indeed, book-bindings should offer one of the fullest means of expression to that love for decorative art which is so real an outgrowth of the day. What we cavil at is not

magnificence of color or design, or even expense, which we think much to be deprecated, but unsuitability. A book is to be held in the hand, or to lie about the room, on table or bookcase, in a neighborly way, until the edge of its welcome is a little dulled, and we offer it the more studied ceremony of the shelves, with their crowded ranks of good company. A strong muslin binding of soft unobtrusive tint, harmonious with whatever background it may chance to encounter, and not rudely sensitive to spot or stain, is, one would say, the obvious choice for your even Christian.

But there is a growing tendency to use very light colors, and very delicate adornments, even for every-day books. These covers, whose *raison d'être* is to protect the pages, must themselves be protected—a precaution which is a confession of their unfitness. Without this paper shield, even the warmth of the fingers often leaves a perceptible smirch, while coal-dust and the breath of the gas are certain disfigurement. Yet novels blossom into their gypsy existence in jonquil yellow, and the pale, perishable hue of the smilax flower. And more than one volume of dainty verse, born to be loved, and often handled with a touch like a caress,

passes its days in lonely state behind glass doors, because its splendor of white and gold transforms the sweet companion into the formal guest. Aside from the misappropriateness of these fantastic covers, they are in themselves objectionable. A pale object, with rigid outlines, lying upon the table, or even standing on the shelves, becomes a spot or a line which insists on being looked at, and which throws everything else out of key.

It is not germane to the matter to say that the early bindings were delicate, fantastic, and enriched, and that we do but go back to a correct and established example when we imitate or even copy them; for the early bindings were the possession of the rich alone, and were held to be testimonies of wealth and objects of display as legitimate as jewels or silver. Had they been popular possessions, we may be sure that the same fine taste which made them sumptuous for the few would have made them serviceable for the many, however beautiful in color or admirable in design.

This fashion of over-decorativeness in decoration is a Saturn devouring its own children. The value of the thing is lost. Thus we see "tidies" made by deft fingers

ostensibly to protect lounges and chairs from the ravages of warm palms, or the mark of hyacinthine locks. But these webs are so dainty, with mysterious "drawn-work," and painfully wrought hand lace, and fairy embroideries, that if time and eyesight be worth anything, they are far costlier than the most prodigal upholstery, while the very thought of the wash-tub is profanation.

The first law of good taste is fitness, lacking which no decorative object is really admirable. Judged by this standard, the elaborate and costly table naperies so generally adopted by fashionable hostesses during the last few years are worthy only of that decree of banishment which is certain to overtake them. The laying of costly satin, or cloth of gold, or folds of shimmering silk down the centre of a board where meats, sauces, wines, and fruits threaten to defile them is a stupidity worthy of the English, from whom we borrowed it, and who are the most tasteless of all decorative blunderers. But it cannot be said that the lace insertions, borders, and ornaments, that are as prodigal in cost as they are beautiful in effect, are much better. For they, too, when soiled, must go through the expensive hands

of the cleaner, whereas everything about the table should imply not only cleanliness, but ease and simplicity of cleanliness.

Lamp-mats fall under a like condemnation, being often of material so expensive and so richly ornamented that they are fit only for wall-hangings. Yet the obvious purpose of a lamp-mat is to protect the table-cover from oil spots or the end of a burning match. And in the same way the table-cover itself is often too fine for use, which is, supposably, to save the finely-polished surface of oak or mahogany from scratches, stains, or blisters. If the ornamentation of the fabric makes it too delicate or too costly to use, without protection, then the limits of decoration have been passed.

Sofa-cushions of white or light-colored satin, or of thin crêpe, embroidered or painted with bunches of pale violets, wild roses, or sweet peas, oppose themselves to every law of decorative art, yet they find delighted purchasers. Lamp-shades whose fluffy lace or pinched-up paper flounces invite a nightly conflagration; picture-frames so emblematic in design, or so over-ornamented that they distract attention from the pictures; vases whose elaboration of decoration makes them utterly unsuitable to display

the flowers which they were made to hold—these are the commonplaces of our homes.

We have safely passed through that phase of decorative evolution where it was said that no man's boot-jack and no woman's ironing-board was safe from the predatory paint-brush of the artistic daughters of the house. But we have not yet comprehended what the general admiration for things Japanese should have taught us—"the simple grace of not too much." Yet we Americans are a clever race, with quick artistic sensibilities; we ought not to find it hard to keep to the law and the prophets in these matters. We have only to remember that decorative art is not fine art, pure and simple, because it must subordinate itself to utility by the very limitations of its existence; and that when it ceases to do so, however successfully it may catch the popular fancy, it has yet become false in idea, and foolish in form.

## ABOUT FURNISHINGS.

BY FLORENCE MORSE.

Is any subject worn more threadbare than that of artistic house-furnishing? Yet is any subject less ready to be dismissed into an honorable retirement? While there are women there will be homes. While there are homes the heart feminine will burn to make them as attractive as possible. And while there remains a great multitude of people who, happily, cannot afford to go to a decorator and furnisher and order in a home, the house-mistress will read all the articles on decoration and furnishing that journal, magazine, or trade-paper supply.

As a rule, her first requirement of the anonymous mentor is that she shall be taught how to make a little money go a long way. And though she will be loth to believe it, the true solution of her problem is to buy very few things. Those of us who remember the wonderful Japanese Exhibit

at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, or who have read Professor Morse's delightful book, *Japanese Homes*,\* must have been struck by the elegance, refinement, and serenity of mind expressed in their quiet, airy, open rooms. The beauty of these apartments is found always in the softness and harmony of coloring, and the exquisite workmanship of walls and ceiling, as well as of the scanty furnishings and ornaments, and not in a profusion of costly and incongruous things. To a high-bred Japanese the notion of a display of possessions for the purpose of indicating his own social place or wealth would be inconceivable. He loves artistic objects for the pleasure they afford to himself and his friends, but he uses them sparingly, never destroying their decorative value by crowding or confusion.

Our habits of life, our climate, and our social conditions make it impossible that in our own abodes we should copy closely a Japanese model. Indeed, we ought to copy closely no model at all, but compose a home interior from our own tastes and necessities. Yet we should profit greatly by an adoption

\* *Japanese Homes and their Surroundings*, by Edward P. Morse. HARPER & BROTHERS.



of the Japanese spirit, which has no false standards of display, which does not sacrifice to convention, which encourages individual taste and skill, which denies that the old is undesirable because it is old, or the new worthy because it is new, which lavishes expense only on objects intrinsically beautiful and lasting, and which insists on freedom, cleanliness, simplicity, and grace as the essentials of household art.

There was a time, a few years ago, when the influence of Eastlake, Morris, and the other English reformers of household taste seemed to have emancipated us from the traditional errors of our ways. At that time we went in for the "sincere" in furniture and decoration, and possibly came out with the ugly. We sometimes mistook the ponderous for the stable, and the dingy for the harmonious. But the whole movement was in the right direction, and we left forever behind us the worship of certain baleful false gods. Yet it is to be lamented that this reform was, for the greater part, imposed upon us from without, and was not the fruit of the artistic soul's own consciousness of sin. So that the fallings from grace, the right-hand stumblings and left-hand defections, are already numerous enough to be

discouraging. For example, we were told by Eastlake, the prophet, that modern window-hangings were worse than a crime; they were a blunder. A window, said this reformer, is an opening made in a wall, at a considerable expense, for the admission of light and air. The modern upholsterer cunningly drapes this aperture so as to exclude every possible ray of light or breath of air, and to increase his bills in proportion to his decrease of the family comfort. First there comes a Holland shade of an objectionable cold hue, which may be pardoned except as to its color, owing to the necessity of modifying the sunlight; then there is added a pair of costly lace curtains, ugly and inappropriate in design, perishable in material, and of no value as a screen, were a screen needed. Fashion demands that these should sweep the floor, and meet across the window, making it difficult to open or shut the sashes without tearing the lace. Superimposed on these draperies is another set of satin, brocade, velvet, rep, or other heavy material, fastened immovably to the casing at the top, behind a sham brass cornice, sweeping the carpet at the bottom to the depth of a foot or more, and drawn back on each side, at an ugly angle, with ornamental cord heavy

enough for a cable. As if bad taste still lacked a monument, a couple of yards of this costly stuff must be draped in foolish and insignificant folds at the top, and called a lambrequin. This arrangement prevails in hundreds of thousands of well-to-do homes, where ordinary intelligence is assumed.

Now, said this voice crying in the wilderness of the commonplace, ponder these things in your hearts. When the window was a mere opening in the wall of a castle or manor, and at a later time, when the glazier imperfectly set the poor glass easements, thick curtains were hung before these apertures, which might be drawn at night to keep out the draught from the already cold and draughty hall. The curtains were suspended on poles, set above the window-easing, that the wind might not blow in over them, and the top of the fabric was turned over, partly for ornament, and partly for utility. These innocent and appropriate ends, fringed out for good looks, are the source of our hideous and senseless lambrequins, which offer harborage to dust and moth. With well-set modern windows, the only excuse for curtains is the beauty of color and line which they substitute for the rigid framework. But they must be made

of materials whose design and coloring are not aggressive, which will fall into beautiful folds, which will slide easily on appropriate rods to uncover the entire glass, and which will never be allowed to swathe the window, to whose importance all embellishment remains secondary.

Conscience-smitten women, reading these denunciations, took down their expensive, deplorable upholstery, gave away their sham brass cornices, and started on their career of penitence with Liberty silks, art muslins, Madras cottons, and real brass rods. The multitude followed, unreasoning but happy. We had a few years of "art" wall-papers, "art" furniture, "art" draperies, wherein much that was good enjoyed favor impartially with much that was bad. Our houses were weeded out, however, and we learned that beauty is not dependent on expense.

But that our virtue is superficial, and that we are not throned above temptation, is proved by the fact that the meretricious French fashions, against which Eastlake and Morris inveighed, have had, are having, another reign of prosperity. Floral wall-papers, floral carpets, in natural forms and colors; furniture with illogical and weak-

ening curves; upholstery in light patterns of realistic flowers, fruits, shepherdesses, or landscapes; meaningless brie-à-brac, all these are "in" once more. Still, no fashion, either of clothes or furnishings, is universal, as once it was. The Japanese-East-lake-Morris-Cook influence has made women think for themselves, and moved the more cultivated and self-reliant among them to act upon the principle that their home is as individual a possession as their wardrobe, and may as honestly express their personal taste and convictions. Moreover, they are far more willing, both in deed and in word, to admit the need of economy when it exists. Now, if to this great gain could be added a sense of the beauty of economy—that is, of the artistic value of sparseness, almost of bareness, in furnishing—lovely homes might be almost as common among us as among the enviable Japanese. It is hardly too much to say that the very best conditions for securing an artistic interior are the combination of cultivated taste, good judgment, that intuitive adaptation of means to ends which we call Yankee ingenuity, and a shallow purse. These things prevail against odds. For example, so many people now make their homes in the country for the

greater part of the year that they take apartments in the city for the winter months alone. Agents are unwilling to decorate a flat or house for so short a time, but the artistic tenant may make her stay happier if the walls be covered temporarily with material of her own selection; something that may be taken down at the end of the season, cleaned, rolled up and packed away for some other house another year.

The most expensive materials are no better in effect than many of the cheapest. Morris designs are repeated on five-cent cheese-cloths, and Japanese cottons. Burlap is another valuable material, while the denims are of untold value to the woman of small means. Instead of painting, papering, and refurnishing a house or flat taken only for a season, it is possible to make wall decorations, furniture and floor coverings that may do duty many times in many places.

Burlap as a wall covering is restful and harmonious, and is valuable as a background. The seams may be lightly sewed and the stuff loosely stretched and nailed; in the course of time the artist of the family may succeed in painting upon it some large effective design, conventional in character. The

wall covering must be separated both from the floor and ceiling by some direct line or border. For this purpose several yards of matting may be used as a dado or frieze—the dado being most effective. Matting of the plain, unfigured Japanese sort, makes an admirable dado, and ordinary tea-chest matting, if cut in panels and framed with narrow moulding, will be satisfactory.

Any amateur artist will be able to paint fruit on such a dado for a dining-room. If there is an objection to draped walls, plain cartridge-paper may be bought for twenty cents a roll, and a room may be pleasantly transformed by it at small expense. Ordinary flock-paper may be used for a dado and painted a rich, dark terra-cotta, for instance, while the walls above may be hung with a lighter cartridge-paper. There are Japanese papers which may be lightly tacked to the wall and easily removed, and which make a low-toned surface. It is not difficult to paper and paint a room one's self, and here is still another opportunity for saving money. A clever woman should be able to copy a frieze in stencil, or she may have the moulding "dropped" ten or twelve inches, if the cartridge-paper is used.

To a woman of taste who has not much

money, and who wishes to have everything about her as pretty and refined as possible, there is nothing so satisfactory as denims. There is a beautiful dull blue that is the best color of all. With a bold embroidery of white floss thread on the borders, the windows may be curtained and doorways draped at less cost and with far more beauty than if their owner were to use any of the materials upon which she may first have set her heart. A broad, long divan, home-made, perhaps, may also have a white-embroidered cover of denim; a dozen cushions of all sizes and shapes have place on such a couch, and are also to be covered with denim. The material may be used on either side, the tones being quite different; and the price of this useful cloth is but twelve and one-half cents a yard.

A floor covering, like the walls of a room, should be quiet and unobtrusive in tone, since it is to serve as background for objects placed upon it. Straw mattings are invaluable, and the plain greenish-white weaves wear longer and better than the colored ones. Those who object to a painted border around a room may use the "fillings" that make an admirable foundation for rugs. Wood-color and old blue are the best wear-



ing colors, the reds and some of the blues fading quickly. The fashion of making rug-shaped carpets has much to commend it, and these may be made from low-priced remnants that will last a lifetime, if not subjected to too hard usage. The large Japanese cotton rugs are a boon to the housewife of moderate means. Some of the colorings and designs are exquisite; they wear well and are moth-proof.

“Corners” have great capabilities. Chairs are to be placed in groups and no longer to stand uninvitingly with backs against the wall. Harmony of color helps to make a distinct atmosphere in a room. The bright reds, blues and “old golds” of the second-rate shops have no place in the artistic home. Plain wooden chairs with cushions, or comfortable chairs without cushions, help towards ideal furnishing. The mantel is not to be draped, nor is the patient piano to be loaded with bric-à-brac. Scarfs are not to hang over chairs, nor bows and ribbons perched where they do not belong. “Effect” must be sought in other ways. For color, large bowls and vases of yellow and red pottery filled with growing plants suffice. Sofas and divans should stand at angles, near open fire or comfortable book-table.

The "centre-table," wheeled from the middle of the room, may become the heart of a "corner."

Low tables about the room have other uses than for the five o'clock teas. The chess-player likes such a table, and so do the children. The real Turkish coffee-table is a pretty piece of furniture now manufactured in America. It is sold as a table or as a stool, and is the prettiest of all low tables. Instead of buying at the art stores the stiff-looking wooden benches, so much like the old-fashioned wash-benches, one may find straight-back settees, to be painted black—using the glossy carriage paint for this purpose; this has a fine enamel and makes an excellent finish. A cushion for the seat, with pillows, is then to be added.

Screens are of the greatest decorative value; they are cheap, considering their endurance when properly treated, and they are useful. They must be chosen with scrupulous care, as they may become the background for a graceful woman or a tall palm, and add much value to the scheme of decoration.

Such a room as this will not seem crowded, and each object in it, being simple and genuine, will enhance the effect of every

other. Books, of course, must have their place, and that place ought never to be a locked or even a glazed bookcase. They should live within easy reach of friendly hands. Pictures and bric-à-brac, one is tempted to say, should be conspicuous by their absence. In the average home these are reckoned as furnishings, and profusion is mistaken for elegance. Pictures are crowded on the walls, without regard to subject or to light, as if the room were a gallery, where every inch of space must be made the most of. Bronzes, porcelain, glass, lamps, candles, sconces, flower-pots, vases, clocks, photograph-frames, silver, statuary, encrios, plaques, are huddled together on mantel, cabinet, bookcase, bracket, table, and shelf, regardless of shape, size, utility, color, or quality. When Christmas brings another invoice of similar possessions, room is made for them by banishing a few of their predecessors to the bedrooms, but the ranks are seldom thinned.

In a Japanese drawing-room one picture would be hung at a time on a wall-space carefully planned to secure the most favorable light. One priceless cabinet, perhaps, would sustain one specimen of *cloisonné*, or porcelain, or marvellous sword-guard of

hammered gold and iron. One noble bronze jar, standing firmly on the floor, would hold one spreading bough of cherry-blossoms, and the decoration of that room would be complete. From time to time these would be changed for other beautiful possessions, but no more objects of art would be seen at once. How dignified, how reposeful, does not such artistic restraint appear to our imaginations! How "cluttered," untidy, and common would not our indiscriminate rîff-raff of bric-à-brac seem to the cultivated Japanese! American lavishness will never be pruned to this Oriental simplicity. But it may learn that a few good pictures in a good light, a few decorative articles, good in themselves and harmonious one with another, make a more beautiful and enduring whole than a multitude of frivolous and unrelated objects.

These suggestions are meant for the makeshift habitations to which so many poor but cultivated families who migrate twice a year are usually doomed. They are meant to help the home-maker who must save money. But they are founded on sound principles. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of beautiful and tasteful surroundings in daily life. If, as Goethe said,

no man leaves a room the same person that he entered it, then the room should attune his spirit to harmony, dignity, and truthfulness. Fussiness must not surround him, nor incongruity, nor pretence. It sometimes seems as if we went exactly the wrong way to work to furnish our houses. We are inclined to adapt our way of life to our surroundings, rather than our surroundings to our way of life. We fill a room to the brim with goods and chattels, and then try to feel that they are the expression of our inward needs, if, indeed, we have any concern beyond that of securing a prettier environment than our neighbors.

If, now, we could put every stick we possess in some commodious store-closet, and begin with one chair, in an empty room, adding, piece by piece, what the need of the hour suggested, and putting chair, table, shelf, or lamp *where* the need of the hour suggested, we should end by producing a delightfully habitable, sensible, attractive interior. And this is only another way of repeating that utility must precede and underlie beauty.

One of the happiest social changes which revised standards of living have induced in America is the increasing love of the country.

This instinct does not demand the satisfactions of Lenox, Newport, or Tuxedo. It is content with cheap and homely family habitations—but on the family habitation it insists. The “summer boarder” gives place more and more every season to the cottager. And this habit of country cottage life, on the sea-shore or in the mountains, demands cheap, tasteful, and serviceable furnishings. The sea-shore will long remain “fashionable,” simply because bathing-places are comparatively few, and will always be crowded. And with the crowd come the Saratoga trunk and the city standards of hospitality and behavior. But mountain places give elbow-room, and incite to the abandonment of conventionalities and all elaboration of living. Thither the hard-worked American may flee for rest and quiet. The mountain cottage, therefore, should free both mistress and servant from all needless toils, and only as it does this can it be really furnished in good taste. This home may become a far more real expression of its occupants than any city-house can be. With tireless energy may the mistress sew, paint, upholster, or hammer. She may mount on ladders to stencil, or grovel on floors to stain. And so greatly will she enjoy her

labors as to be in constant danger of doing too much, and spoiling that quaint simplicity which is the soul of sylvan beauty. Let the down-stairs floors be stained or painted only, and the chamber floors covered, for quietness, with clean and dainty matting. If there are any rugs, let them be cheap, and light in weight, and low in tone. There is color enough in woods and sky and grass and flowers. Let factory wares bear themselves with modesty. Matched-boards of clear pine make a warm and cleanly wall and ceiling surface, which grows warmer and darker with time. On such walls pictures should be hung with a sparing hand, and perhaps the best taste would banish them entirely. No picture can be so beautiful as that living one of swaying boughs and bending grass and stately mountain which every window frames. And for that reason, as for others, curtains should be the simplest undraped lengths of muslin or silkoline or chintz, that may be drawn at night, but need not impede the light by day. Wooden settles, covered with denim or chintz, cushioned with fibre, and plentifully bestrewn with various shapes and sizes of comfortable pillows; kitchen tables made presentable by denim or chintz table-

cloths, roomy and comfortable for books, work, or games; small rustic tables made by the neighboring carpenter; a rustic desk from the same craftsman; rocking-chairs, wide-armed shaker-chairs, a shelf running all round the room, five feet from the floor, for books, vases, the clock, accumulating odds and ends; an old-fashioned wide-throated chimney, with a fire on the old-fashioned plain andirons whenever the temperature will permit; plenty of lamps, homely and serviceable; great brown pottery jars, of the coarse texture of drain-pipe, but delightful in color, for tree-boughs and blackberry vines, and golden-rod, and ferns, and the "keeping-room" will have become a joy of color and a triumph of suitability, and therefore of good taste, at an expense of perhaps fifty dollars for furnishings. One end of the keeping-room should serve as acknowledged dining-room, with the dinner-set displayed on an open dresser, stained a neutral shade and fitted with curtains, let us say. Except a table and the necessary chairs, this dining-room end will require no more furnishing. Bedrooms should be treated with equal simplicity, good coloring being soon found to atone for any lack of furniture. Excellent dressing-tables, wash-



stands, and paper-closets may be made of packing-boxes, with cotton hangings; and the entire furnishing of an eight-roomed cottage of this simple description may be accomplished—has been accomplished—for less than two hundred dollars. Yet the selection is as tasteful, the composition as harmonious, the color as beautiful as the most fastidious critic could desire. The secret of success is the absence of all second-rate ornamentation, the fewness of decorative objects, the genuine utility and simplicity of every article, and the unbroken color harmonies. Effects are not frittered away, and the feeling of restfulness dominates the house.

In this matter of furnishing we ought to bear in mind that upon utility must all ideas of decoration and ornament finally rest, and that an over-dressed house is, were that possible, in worse taste than an over-dressed woman.

## DECORATIVE AND APPLIED ART.

BY CANDACE WHEELER.

IN defining the two expressions of human ability which we call "Decorative and Applied Art," it is necessary first to show, not only the compass and meaning, but the *limits* of both, to explain where the one ends and the other begins, and to bound the legitimate field of each.

Decorative Art, in a simple and broad sense, covers all art which enriches and beautifies architecture, whether of public monuments, buildings devoted to national or governmental use, to religious worship, or the more or less elaborate structures devoted to the varying requirements of domestic shelter. It is the function of decorative art to assist in making all these different evidences of man's power and ability beautiful. It includes sculpture and painting wherever these arts are accessory to the perfection or beauty of architectural con-

struction. It includes all forms of enrichment by art, whether in carving, color, incised work, or inlaying. It may use clay, stone, glass, wood, metal, or pigment, in any order or manner which is harmonious with the structure to which it belongs. It may add carvings in all materials, and castings in all metals; but in the use of all these different ways and means of art, it must never fail to acknowledge its dependence. It includes mural painting, however wide its scope or dignified its character. The greatest efforts of the greatest painters may cover the lengthened perspective of a Loggia, or soar upward in the aerial spaces of the grandest dome. They may marshal the long procession of the richest frieze, or crowd the grand divisions of a ceiling with visions of beauty. All these are still but accessory to the art that leads the grand procession—the art that may and can reach and compass the highest qualities of sublime and compelling beauty, the art which is inevitably based upon mechanical and mathematical knowledge and founded upon the immutable laws of nature and science. But where architecture *leads*, decorative art follows. Its first principle then is *subordination*. To be itself it must acknowledge its

dependence, and be not only content but proud to be secondary. It must be as scrupulous in its allegiance as were the greatest masters who left to succeeding generations the frescos of the Sistine Chapel, the airy decorations of the courts of the Vatican, and the sculptures and mosaics of the great cathedrals and churches of the Early and Middle Ages. It may hold in the sight of all men this record of its nobility, and proceed on its way through the closing years of this joyous nineteenth century looking forward to a future as useful, as honored, and as proudly capable, as any period which has preceded it. The present prosperity of the world, the probable and increasing devotion of the riches of the world to the wants and tastes instead of the warfare of mankind, promise a revival of architecture in its largest and highest possibilities; and the revival of architecture means a revival, a growth, a progress in the arts. The marshalling of beauty which characterizes the Columbian Fair will be followed by an almost universal recognition of the value of the purely decorative arts in conjunction with architecture, and it is wise to insist upon the principle upon which all good, lasting, and successful decorative art must

forever rest, the principle of subordination—the fact that it has not a first and most prominent, but an entirely secondary function. The moment it claims to be more than accessory, that it strives to create a dominant impression upon the mind, or become an independent impersonation of thought, it ceases to be true to its function, and creates a dissonance, or want of harmony. There have been, and are, instances where the thought and performance of the decorator is greater than that of the builder, where the work or creation of the architect is greatly dignified and ennobled by the superior talent of the painter or decorator; but if he is true to the principle which underlies his art, that of subordination, the work of the architect will not be absorbed, the building will not become merely a theatre for the display of his talent; the primary motive will remain, no matter how much it may be ennobled by the sympathy and power of the decorator, or the superior greatness of his gifts. He may people the structure with immortal statues, or make it precious with immortal pictures, but they will relate to its original purpose, and be governed by the style or period in which the architect chose to express himself. It

is perhaps pardonable to insist upon the rank of this principle of subordination, even although it is a universally recognized one, because out of it grow all the principles, all the philosophy of decorative and applied art, even to its widest and most remote application. We cannot fail to recognize its truth, even beyond where construction in the sense of architecture ceases, and decoration becomes applied art, or art applied to objects and manufactures. The primary principle underlies both, and it can easily be seen how all qualities, virtues, and excellencies grow out of these first and underlying principles. Subordination includes appropriateness, appropriateness includes suggestiveness, suggestiveness means all the poetry of thought called out by perfect treatment of a noble theme, the treatment expressed by composition. Beauty of color and grace of line are qualities which are individual gifts, and serve to make the work of one artist more precious and attractive than that of another; but even these gifts must conform to laws, if we are to secure that conjunction which completes and perfects the most comprehensive beauty achieved by man—the beauty which becomes a permanent heritage of pleasurable

sensation to the human race, and an absolute influence in its progress towards higher living.

This influence may seem a great deal to claim for art, but since the moral training of humanity is by means of its pleasures and its pains, no better teacher can be found than that which confers happiness by the gratification of the inherent and natural love of art; and hardly a greater good can be worked for mankind than the creation of universal and surrounding beauty. Decorative and applied art are of the utmost importance to mankind, since the one contributes to those monuments which excite the loftiest and most supreme satisfaction, and the other surrounds, or may surround, the individual with endless sources of pleasure and content. Applied art is to decorative art what the child is to the man. It is in short a consequence of the greater work, but it holds within itself the same obligation to the same laws. It is the application of knowledge and love of art to the implements and manufactures of the mechanic and the manufacturer. It applies to things we may wear or use or handle, the small conveniences which are a part of our daily lives. It moulds the shape of the

rude and common implement into grace, and invests it with interest and beauty. It puts art and *thought* into the things which surround us. It elevates our habits, and invests our customs with dignity, and is our unconscious teacher in beauty, grace, and truth. It fuses thought, sentiment, and feeling into the insensate matter of which these surroundings are composed, and performs the miracle of exciting in us an answering thought. It makes these things speak to us with a human voice, and express human thought as truly as a book may convey the thought of another mind to us; and in proportion as the thought is true, and the expression beautiful, are we benefited or deteriorated by its proximity.

It is this domestic influence, if we may call it so, of applied art which makes its practice of true principles of importance to us. It is almost more necessary to the growth and culture of the every-day world that every-day art, the finish, proportion, and excellence of the things among which we live, and by which we live, should be perfect, and perfectly true to principles, than that we should have more or less frequent opportunities of studying the highest examples of human achievement. It is al-



ways a long step between us and them, even in comprehension; but the other lives with us, and is a part of our lives; it enters into our unconseious thoughts, and makes our judgment just and our knowledge enlightened. Applied art could do none of these things unless, in its best and purest practice, it followed the laws which govern decorative art, even to its utmost derivative. It must always and forever be mindful of its dependence and its meaning. It may be as beautiful as nature, and as harmonious as the truest chord upon the most perfect instrument, but its kind of beauty must be based upon the use of the thing to which it is applied, and its harmony be in accord with the purpose or necessity to which it is added. In short the same great principles of subordination and appropriateness upon which decorative art is founded are as strenuously binding in the varied and endless directions of applied art. It is easy to illustrate this by reference to any one of the manufactures to which art is, or may be, applied. Take, for instance, that of the silversmith. A silver spoon may be as truly an object of art as a picture, but it must begin by being perfectly adapted to its use. It must have the form which is best and most

convenient for its original purpose. It must not lose its proper balance in length for convenient holding, or its proper depth of bowl for carrying liquids. It must not be so ornamented in stem as to inconvenience the hand which holds it, or so encrusted with relief in the bowl as to interfere with its proper service as a receptacle. A pair of tongs must perform its function of holding and lifting burning brands, or the ornament which makes it inefficacious is wrongly applied and inappropriate.

In the broad field of art applied to textiles and wall coverings there is room for profound study of the rules and philosophy of applied art, and the necessity of such study is apparent in the interior of almost every house, and in the materials shown in every shop window. It is a great mistake to suppose that in small things the rules of art, the philosophy of art, may be neglected. Small things cease to be unimportant if largely treated. The same kind of value may attach to a yard of muslin covered with beautiful and appropriate design, and treated with exhaustive knowledge and appreciation of color, as would belong to a picture by the same artist. It is a very common error to suppose that incomplete and inferior knowl-

edge will suffice for the designer. Good design requires not only perfect observance of the fundamental law of appropriateness, but personal gifts of grace and composition, and an education which is not only technical, but special and literary. The designer should know the art of all nations and ages in design, not for imitation, but for cultivation. His compositions may and should be entirely uninfluenced by them in feeling, but he will have learned from them what is true or false in art, and to judge wisely of his own work. It is not to be supposed that the manufacturer should know what is absolutely best among the designs which he reproduces. He knows clearly the qualities which will appeal to the public, and except when a design is backed by a name which has influence with the buying public, and has gained its confidence, he will rarely accept a design which does not appeal to the popular taste by its color and sentiment. The enjoyment of fresh and positive coloring seems to be universal. There is also a universal liking for exact reproductions of familiar flowers, and as these two likings are inherent and spontaneous, the thoughtful designer will do well to add to his list of necessary requirements for a design, fresh and good color, and

absolute truth in following natural forms. This is where Japanese design has obtained, and well deserves to obtain, world-wide popularity. Every flower or leaf or plant which appears in Japanese design is absolutely an individual specimen, true to its individualism as well as its species, and while there is little composition in the sense of large and regularly recurring groups or masses in Japanese design, the absolute truth and grace of drawing, and the unerring taste in *placing* ornament, has given Japanese art a foremost place in influence and favor in the world.

This truth to nature in representation does not by any means detract from composition in design, for there is abundant subject for composition in nature as well as for individual ornament. The important thing is to gather into design or into applied art all truth, all beauty, and all that will influence or elevate humanity; to be forever mindful of the dignity and value of art as a means of education and of happiness; and to be content with nothing less than the best, either as artist or possessor.

THE END

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
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